UN Chronicle

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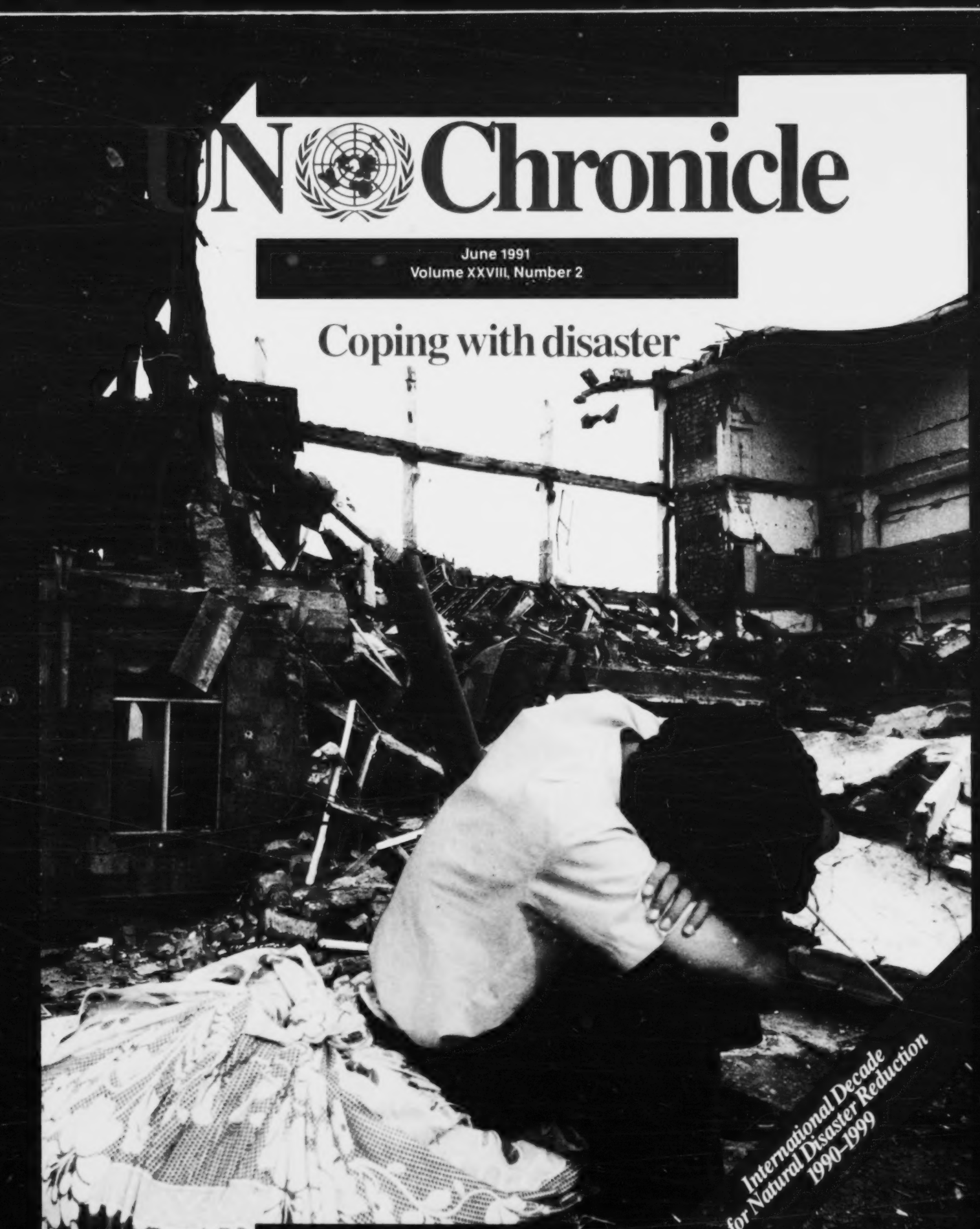
Coping with disaster



International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction 1990–1999

Department of Public Information
United Nations

At least once in our lifetime . . .

The history of disaster reads like a roll-call of death. In the fourteenth century, the plague killed some 75 million people, mostly in Europe and the Near East. Famine and typhus took the lives of a million and a half people in Ireland in the mid-1800s. Millions of people were reported as casualties in the 1918 influenza epidemic. Bhopal, Armenia, Mexico City, Chernobyl, Bangladesh – the magnitude of human suffering has erased the artificial boundaries between man-made and natural disasters. Each and every person alive today is likely to be involved in at least one major natural disaster during his or her lifetime. Hundreds of millions will be struck by catastrophes provoked by man's technological or political miscalculations. The writing is on the wall. We must not ignore it. Being prepared can save lives. It can also soften the blow of disasters on the economy and make recovery faster and less painful. That is the message of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990-1999).

Cover photo courtesy of CARE

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UN CHRONICLE

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CONTENTS

January — April 1991

WAR IN GULF AREA OVER (p.4)

Historic resolution 687 sets terms for ceasefire

Political developments

Cambodia (p.19) Middle East (p.22)
Afghanistan (p.24) Cyprus, Western Sahara (p.25)
Haiti, El Salvador (p.26)

Other news

Charter Committee (p.27); Conference on Disarmament (p.28); Partial Test-Ban Treaty (p.30); Anti-terrorist convention (p.32); Law of Sea (p.33); Outer space (p.34); Human rights (p.36); Climate convention (p.56); Earth News (p.58); UNCTAD (p.60); Africa: food shortages (p.62); Development Report (p.64); Social development (p.65); Women (p.68); Children (p.71); Population (p.73).

COVER SECTION:

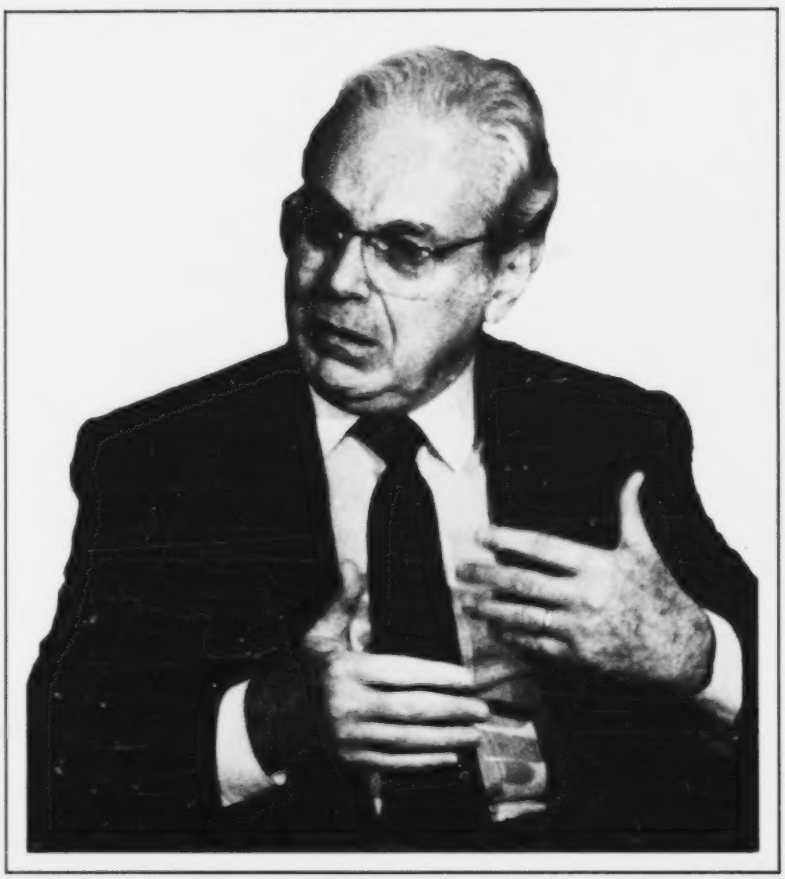
Coping with disaster (pp.40-55)

IN EVERY ISSUE

The 38th Floor (p.2)
Anti-Apartheid Notes (p.20)
BookWatch (p.75)
A Look Back—
International Year of Disabled Persons (p.76)
News Almanac (p.78)
Stamp Corner (p.79)
Coming Up (p.80)

READEX FICHE

THE 38th FLOOR



UN Photo 171835/S. Lwin

Excerpts from statements by UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar made between 1 January and 31 March 1991

Encouraging hope in arms limitation . . .

In the field of arms limitation and disarmament, the agreements that have been reached encourage hope that much more can be achieved. The 1987 Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Nuclear Missiles between the United States and the Soviet Union will, we trust, soon be supplemented by the strategic arms reduction talks agreement which is expected to cut their strategic nuclear forces significantly. The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe concluded in Paris last November and the new set of confidence- and security-building measures adopted in the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe have genuinely established a new basis for growing cooperation. These positive measures, if fully and faithfully implemented by all parties, will definitely have a lasting impact on international peace and security.

At the opening session of the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, Switzerland, 22 January

'The riches of nature'

Ancient peoples had great respect for their natural environment, because they depended on it for their sustenance. I consider this gift of Denmark to be particularly appropriate at a time when the earth's natural resources, many of them non-renewable, are constantly being threatened and degraded—by carelessness, abuse and by natural and man-made disasters, including conflict.

Human beings have the technology and the ingenuity to benefit from the riches of nature, but they must learn to respect the resources they use, lest they destroy them completely. Peoples in the past revered their environment because they realized it was their primary source of life. Let us hope that future generations will form the same impression of us.

At the unveiling of a gift from Denmark to the United Nations entitled "The Sun Chariot", presented by Queen Margrethe II, New York, 22 February

Decolonization: a historic anniversary

The year 1990 was not only the thirtieth anniversary of the historic Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, but also the year when Namibia acceded to independence. In this context, I wish to pay special tribute to the important contribution that this Committee has made, both as an advocate for the rights of the Namibian people, and in supporting the efforts that led to the independence of Namibia.

At the opening of the 1991 session of the Special Committee on decolonization, New York, 21 February

'A new South Africa'

I am confident that the international community will do its utmost to foster the process of negotiation on a new constitution for the establishment of a united, non-racial and democratic society in South Africa as soon as possible. For my part, I will continue to follow closely developments in South Africa, particularly the progress made in the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on Apartheid, as requested by the General Assembly. I shall continue to spare no efforts to facilitate the process leading to the peaceful eradication of apartheid. The historic opportunity that has emerged in South Africa must succeed. The most recent initiatives of President de Klerk are encouraging as they show that a common vision for a new South Africa is materializing.

At a solemn meeting of the Special Committee against Apartheid for the observance of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, New York, 21 March

Eliminating the world's military arsenals

It is encouraging to observe that the progressive elimination of the world's military arsenals, including nuclear weapons, has already begun. The qualitative development of nuclear armaments has now been limited to a few technical areas. The principle of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons has gained a momentum by specific actions and declarations of a number of Member States who have reiterated their renunciation of the nuclear option. The Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts of the Conference on Disarmament is making meaningful progress in the consideration of various technical issues related to the verification of a nuclear-test ban.

At the opening of the Amendment Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water, New York, 7 January

'Vigil of Hope' for Alec Collett

Six years have now passed since our friend and colleague Alec Collett was taken hostage near Beirut while on assignment for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). . . . At this solemn meeting, we gather to rekindle our hope—the hope that those taken captive in Lebanon and elsewhere will soon be freed, and the hope that the reprehensible act of taking innocent people hostage will cease.

At a joint UN Correspondents Association (UNCA)-United Nations "Vigil of Hope", New York, 25 March

Preventing terrorism

International terrorism, aside from endangering or taking innocent human lives, has a serious negative effect on international relations and may jeopardize the territorial integrity and security of States. It is, accordingly, no surprise that the United Nations, as an organization whose primary function is the maintenance of international peace and security, should have devoted, during the past 20 years, so much attention and energy to the elimination of acts of international terrorism and of their underlying causes. The Organization is aware of the need to prevent and curb not only direct unlawful uses of force in inter-State relations, but also covert forms of violence which are pursued in an insidious and clandestine fashion and are frequently therefore more difficult to counteract.

At the opening session of the International Conference on Air Law, Montreal, Canada, 12 February

'A terrible tragedy'

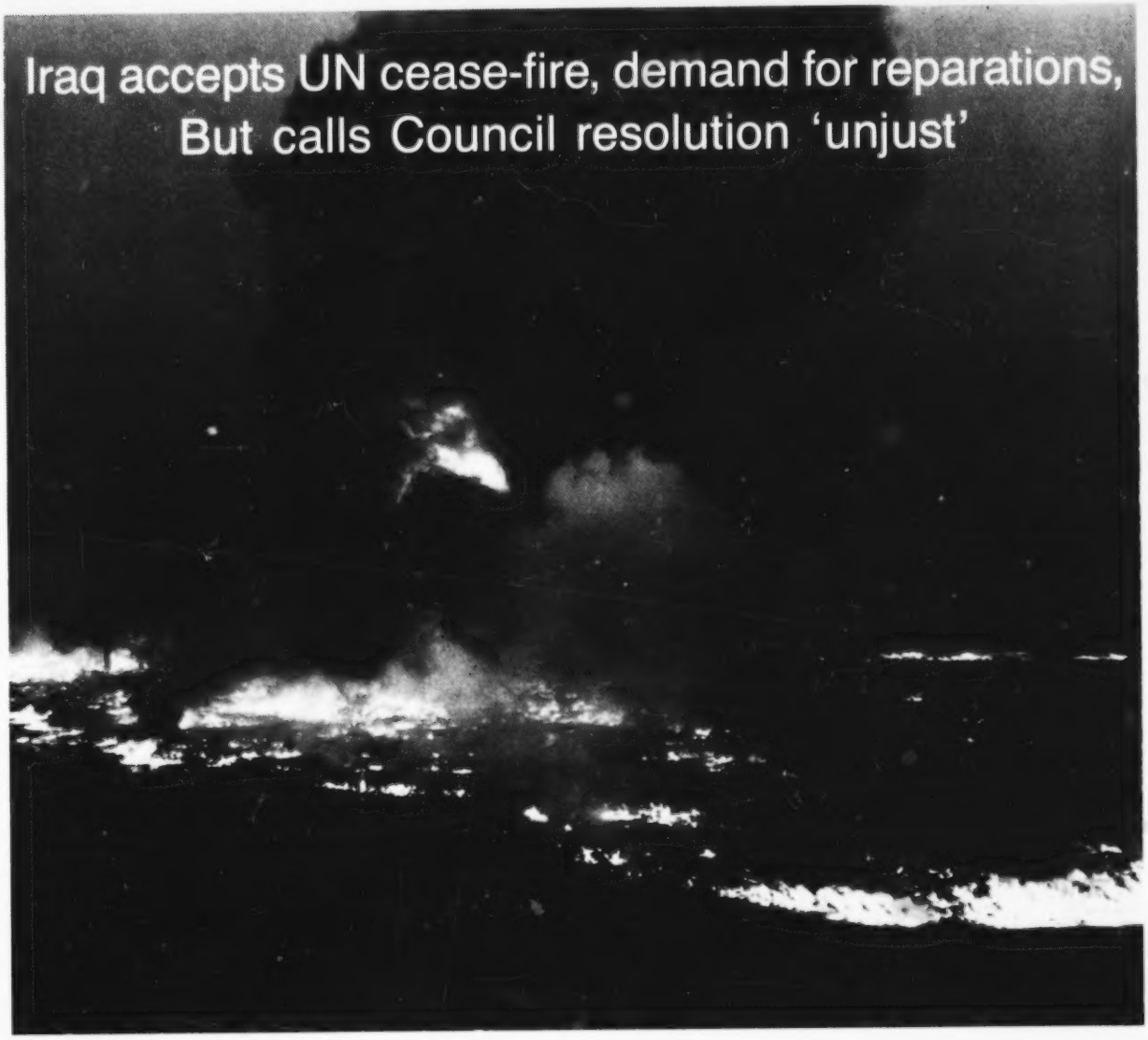
War in Persian Gulf area ends

Reuters/Bettmann

Liberating Kuwait City, 23 February.

The diplomatic end to the 43-day war in the Persian Gulf area came quietly at UN Headquarters in New York after Iraq delivered identical letters to the UN Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, accepting the terms of a permanent cease-fire arrangement.

Iraq accepts UN cease-fire, demand for reparations, But calls Council resolution 'unjust'



UN Photo 158122/J Isaac

Oil well fires in Kuwait rage on after war ends.

In a four-and-a-half page document dated 6 April, Iraqi Foreign Minister Ahmed Hussein strongly criticized, but accepted, Security Council resolution 687 (1991). Adopted on 3 April, the complex, nine-part resolution set terms for a permanent cease-fire.

Among other things, Iraq was called on to accept a 1963 border agreement with Kuwait, to agree to compensate Kuwait for damages it had caused during the occupation and to destroy weapons of mass destruction. A UN observer unit was to monitor a demilitarized zone along a boundary between Iraq and Kuwait.

Mr. Hussein called the text "unjust", alleged it comprised "iniquitous and vengeful measures", and constituted "an unprecedented assault" on the sovereignty and rights of his country.

The UN, he claimed, was applying a "double standard" to Iraq, in the form of "criteria of duality" in international relations. Nevertheless, he stated at the conclusion of his missive *(S/22456)* that Iraq "has no choice but to accept this resolution".

Five days later on 11 April, Paul Noterdaeme of Belgium, President of the Security Council, formally acknowledged Iraq's acceptance—

Resolution 687: An unprecedented text

Terms for a formal cease-fire for the Persian Gulf war were set out in the 34 carefully-crafted paragraphs of Security Council resolution 687 (1991), adopted on 3 April, after more than a month of behind-the-scenes negotiations. On 6 April, Iraq officially accepted the terms of the text. In practical terms, the historic nine-part resolution sets out specific conditions by which international peace and security would be restored to the region.

Sponsored by Belgium, France, Romania, the United Kingdom, the United States and Zaire, the text was adopted during a four-and-a-half hour afternoon meeting. The vote was 12 to 1 (Cuba), with 2 abstentions (Ecuador, Yemen).

The Secretary-General established an interdepartmental coordinating group of senior UN officials to supervise the implementation of resolution 687.

●

By **PART A** of the resolution, the Council demanded that Iraq and Kuwait respect the inviolability of the 1963 international boundary between the two countries and called upon the Secretary-General to help demarcate that boundary.

Under **PART B**, it requested him to submit a plan for deploying a UN observer unit to monitor a demilitarized zone, established under the resolution. That deployment would establish the conditions for the withdrawal of allied forces from Iraq.

By **PART C**, Iraq should accept unconditionally the destruction, removal or rendering harmless of all its chemical and biological weapons and ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150 kilometres. Iraq would submit to the Secretary-General, within 15 days of the resolution's adoption, a declaration of the locations, amounts and types of such weapons.

Further, the Secretary-General would develop a plan for creating a special commission to carry out immediate on-site inspection of Iraq's biological, chemical and missile capabilities. The commission would take possession of all such weapons and missiles from Iraq and supervise their destruction.

Iraq would undertake unconditionally not to use, develop, construct or acquire any biological, chemical or missile capabilities, as well as any nuclear weapons or nuclear-weapons-usable material. The International Atomic Energy Agency would be called on to inspect Iraq's nuclear capabilities and submit to the Council, within 45 days, a plan calling for the destruction, removal or rendering harmless of all such items.

By **PART D**, the Secretary-General was asked to report to the Council on the steps taken to facilitate the return of all Kuwaiti property seized by Iraq.

PART E reaffirmed Iraq's liability under international law for any direct loss, damage or injury to foreign Governments, nationals and corporations, as a result of its unlawful invasion and occupation of Kuwait. The Council demanded that Iraq "adhere scrupulously" to all of its foreign debt obligations; decided to create a fund to pay compensation for claims against Iraq; and decided to establish a commission to administer the fund.

Further, the Council asked the Secretary-General to recommend mechanisms for determining the appropriate level of Iraq's contribution to the fund, based on a percentage of the value of its petroleum and petroleum-product exports, taking into account the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people and Iraq's payment capacity.

Under **PART F**, the Council decided to lift prohibitions against the sale or supply to Iraq of foodstuffs and materials and supplies for essential civilian needs. That decision would be reviewed every 60 days. Once the Council determined that Iraq had completed all the actions outlined above, the prohibitions against the import of commodities and products originating in Iraq would have no further force or effect. Exceptions to those prohibitions would be approved by the Committee established under resolution 661 (1990). In the meantime, all States would continue to prevent the sale or supply, promotion or facilitation of such sale or supply to Iraq of arms and related material, weapons technology and related personnel, or materials for training or technical support services.

By **PART G**, Iraq was called upon to extend all necessary cooperation to the International Committee of the Red Cross to facilitate the repatriation of all Kuwaitis and third-country nationals.

Under **PART H** of the resolution, Iraq was required to inform the Council that it would not commit or support any act of international terrorism.

By **PART I**, a formal cease-fire between Iraq, Kuwait and the countries cooperating with Kuwait would come into effect once Iraq had officially notified the Secretary-General and the Council of its acceptance of the provisions.

UN Photo 158113/J Isaac

The ravages of war. Kuwait City car showroom.

"irrevocable and without qualifying conditions"—of resolution 687, adding that Council members had asked him to note that conditions established in the resolution had been met and that the formal cease-fire was effective.

A crucial role for the UN

The United Nations, in an unprecedented way, had played a crucial role throughout the eight-month international crisis, which began on 2 August 1990 when Iraq invaded, occupied and annexed its neighbour—the tiny, oil-rich State of Kuwait—calling it an "integral part" of Iraq.

During that period, the 15-member Security Council, acting in most instances with near unanimity, adopted 15 resolutions related to the crisis, among other things: condemning the initial invasion; calling for Iraqi troop withdrawal and protection of prisoners of war, diplomats and civilians; imposing strong, mandatory, comprehensive economic sanctions against Iraq until it complied with its demands; arranging for aid to innocent victims of the conflict and countries economically affected by the embargo; and setting a deadline before authorizing the use of "all necessary means" to restore international peace and security in the area.

The deadline passed. And a seven-week war took place—waged by a coalition of troops representing 34 nationalities—to oust Iraq from Kuwait.

But even after diplomatic formalities had been concluded, the devastating human, economic and ecological consequences of the crisis remained.

Hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons streamed towards and across borders of neighbouring nations. Bloody civil strife ravaged cities and the countryside in Iraq. Oil well fires raged throughout Kuwait, blanketing that country day and night with polluting smoke. Environmental experts searched for solutions to the damaging consequences of the monumental, some say deliberate, oil spill into the Persian Gulf.

Special missions

Special UN missions were dispatched in early March to assess the situations in both Kuwait and Iraq regarding health conditions, environment, human rights abuses and damage to economic infrastructure.

The UN received reports during the war that at least 50,000 Iraqis had been taken prisoner by the coalition forces and some 33,000 Kuwaitis by Iraq. The release of these troops began in early March.

The return of Kuwaiti property seized by Iraq was also under way, with the Office of the UN Secretary-General arranging for the modalities.

On 9 April, in adopting resolution 689 (1991), the Council deployed the UN Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) to the area.

Reuters/Bettmann

Surveying the ruins of an Iraqi hotel near a telecommunications facility that was bombed.

'Pause for goodwill'

In a historic and controversial decision—the adoption of resolution 678 (1990) on 29 November—the Security Council had instituted what it called a "pause of goodwill", giving Iraq 48 days to comply with its demand for withdrawal from Kuwait.

It set a deadline of 15 January 1991, after which Member States co-operating with Kuwait—the nations which came to be known as the "coalition" or the "allies"—were authorized to use "all necessary means" to uphold and implement Council resolutions "and to restore international peace and security in the area".

Both quiet and public diplomacy ensued during that "pause of goodwill", culminating in, among other things, a highly-publicized six-hour, head-to-head meeting in Geneva on 9 January between Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz and United States Secretary of State James Baker.

'Polite but unsuccessful'

Despite dim diplomatic prospects, Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar undertook a two-day peace mission to Iraq on 12 and 13 January, meeting for three and a half hours with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, to urge him to comply with the Security Council resolutions.

Returning to New York just before the 15 January deadline, he reported sadly that the talks were "polite but, unfortunately, unsuccessful". He stated: "The world stands between peace and war."

He again appealed to the Iraqi leader "to turn the course of events away from catastrophe and towards a new era of justice and harmony" based on the principles of the UN Charter.

If Iraq would signify its readiness to comply with the relevant Council resolutions, and clear and substantial steps were taken to implement those resolutions, a just peace, with all its benefits, would follow. He therefore urged President Hussein to commence, without delay, the total withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

Once that process was well under way, he assured the Iraqi leader, on the basis of understandings he had received from Governments at the highest level, that neither Iraq nor its forces would be attacked by those arrayed in the international coalition against his country.

With the commencement of withdrawal, the Secretary-General said he would, with the consent of the parties concerned and the agreement of the Security Council, be prepared immediately to deploy UN observers and, if necessary, UN forces to certify the withdrawal and to ensure that hostilities did not erupt on the ground.

He would also urge the Security Council to review its decisions imposing sanctions against Iraq, and encourage a process whereby foreign forces deployed in the area would be phased out.

Finally, he said, he had every assurance, once again from the highest levels of Government, that with the resolution of the crisis, every effort would be made to address, in a comprehensive manner, the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Palestinian question.

In the tenth year of his tenure as UN Secretary-General, he said, no cause would give him greater satisfaction than to set the Middle East, as a whole on the road to a just

UN Photo 177357

The Secretary-General on the way to Baghdad.

and lasting peace. No disappointment, however, would be greater and more tragic than to find the nations of the world engaging in a conflict that none of their peoples wanted.

War breaks out

On 16 January, just after 7 p.m. (EST), it was reported that hostilities in the area had begun.

Kuwait informed the Security Council that it was "exercising its right to self-defence and to the restoration of its rights", and in so doing was "cooperating with the forces of fraternal and friendly States which are equally determined to end the obdurate Iraqi occupation". Iraq, it stated, had "deliberately closed the doors to all well-intentioned endeavours".

Saudi Arabia, on whose territory the coalition forces were stationed, stated that military operations had begun because "all efforts, initiatives and appeals" had been "adamantly rejected" by Saddam Hussein, even though it had been possible for him "to avoid the occurrences of these battles to prevent bloodshed".

The United States stated: "Further delay would only have prolonged the suffering of the Kuwaiti people and increased the risks to the military forces of the United States and other States cooperating with the Government of Kuwait."

The better part of the war was waged from the sky, with coalition air forces pounding military, communications and other strategic infrastructure inside Iraq. Meanwhile, Iraq launched regular ground-to-ground SCUD missile attacks against locations in Saudi Arabia and Israel. Part of its airforce fled to Iran to sit out the war.

Israel on 28 January reported to the UN *(S/22160)* that "destructive and unprovoked" missile attacks by Iraq had caused civilian deaths, injuries and damage to homes and property. Saddam Hussein had also threatened to use chemical weapons against Israel, which had no aggressive intentions against Iraq or any other Arab State, it stated.

The Secretary-General condemned the attacks against Israel, expressing regret that they were spreading the conflict, since Israel was not part of the coalition. He also deplored the fact that the targets were civilians.

On 30 January, the Secretary-General revealed that contingency plans for a possible UN observer and peace-keeping role in the Persian Gulf area were being formulated, and that he was studying a Nordic proposal regarding troop contribution to such a body.

UN Photo 158123/J. Isaac

Iraqi tank near Kuwait City.

UN Photo 158237/J. Isaac

Refugees near the northern border of Kuwait.

'Massive military confrontation'

On 1 February, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had reported that millions of civilians had been caught up in the violence, without shelter or protection against occupation and bombing. The Secretary-General appealed for humanitarian assistance for refugees, displaced persons and civilians in the area.

On 8 February, in a statement before the Council, the Secretary-General said that a massive military confrontation was under way in the region, with immense implications for Iraq, Kuwait and the world as a whole. Diplomatic efforts to solve the crisis should not be put on hold; on the contrary, they should be intensified.

He had watched the developments of the past 23 days "with anguish and regret". As Secretary-General of the UN, he could not but be "saddened by the failure of diplomatic efforts, including my own, and the consequent necessity to resort to force". Until the last moment, he had hoped that the situation between Iraq and Kuwait could be solved peacefully.

On 22 January, the Secretary-General said he had witnessed with "profound grief and anxiety the increasing severity of the war and the widening of the area of hostilities" in the Persian Gulf. He appealed to Iraq to prevent further escalation of death and destruction and the suffering of the peoples in the region by complying with UN resolutions.

Iraqi charge: 'Heinous crimes'

In a series of letters to the Secretary-General, Iraqi Foreign Minister Aziz referred to what he called the "heinous premeditated crimes" being committed against Iraq in order to destroy it.

On 24 January *(S/22154)*, he wrote to the Secretary-General expressing further accusations to the members of the Council and the Secretary-General.

On 30 January, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar noted that in requiring Iraqi compliance with relevant Council resolutions, the UN "sought not surrender, but the most honourable way of resolving a crisis in a manner that respected all legitimate interests and was conducive to the wider peace and the rule of law".

UN actions in the present crisis, he said, "must be perceived as part of the larger endeavour of the Organization to establish peace through justice, whenever the one was imperilled and the other denied".

More reports

Iraq sent a series of reports to the UN after the outbreak of hostilities. On 21 January, it said, the United States had bombed a factory producing infant formula. The United States reported that the facility in question had been manufacturing bacteriological weapons. Iraq asked that a UN fact-finding mission investigate the allegation.

Iraq also reported a 13 February bombing of what it called "a shelter

for civilians'' in Baghdad, housing 400 people. The United States said that that facility was ''a military command and control centre''.

The United States also had assured the Council that coalition forces, in their air action against Iraqi military targets, were taking every precaution ''to minimize collateral damage to civilian facilities''.

Iraq on 6 February also declared that it would not pay creditor States, which were participating in the aggression against it, ''the amounts corresponding to the compensation owed to Iraq for the damage inflicted on it''.

Formal but private

As the war progressed, the Security Council held almost continual informal consultations. States of the Arab Maghreb Union—Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia—as well as Yemen and Cuba, requested an urgent formal session of the Council. But some Council members, including coalition leaders, opposed such a move.

On 13 February, the Council decided to discuss the matter in a formal but private meeting. Verbatim records of the sessions were to be made public.

Subsequently, the Council formally met six times in private—on 14, 15, 16, 23 and 25 February and on 2 March. No formal action was taken at any of those meetings, although Cuba submitted three draft resolutions, one demanding an end to the bombing of Iraq.

Ready to deal

On 15 February, Iraq informed the Council *(S/22229)* of its ''readiness to deal on the basis of Security Council resolution 660 (1990) with a view to reaching an honourable and acceptable political solution'', including withdrawal from Kuwait.

But it linked its commitment for withdrawal to a number of points, including: a complete and comprehensive cease-fire; annulment of the remaining 11 Council resolutions on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait; withdrawal from the Middle East of forces ''participating in the aggression''; and withdrawal of Israel from Palestine and other occupied Arab territories.

Kuwait replied immediately that Iraq's declaration, which contained conditions, ''added nothing'' to its ''stubborn position''. Kuwait insisted on ''full and unconditional compliance'' with all relevant Council resolutions.

In a statement issued in Cairo, the Foreign Ministers of the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Syria and Egypt, said the Iraqi proposal contained ''unacceptable conditions'' and would hamper implementation of Council resolutions.

The United States said the steps the Iraqis were considering would constitute a conditional withdrawal and prevent full implementation of relevant Council resolutions.

On 18 February, Soviet President Gorbachev and Iraqi Foreign Minister Aziz discussed in Moscow specific Soviet peace proposals.

The plan was distributed to the UN Secretary-General and the Heads of State or Government of France, the United Kingdom, the United States and China. On 24 February, just after ground operations were launched by coalition forces, Iraq endorsed the Soviet peace initiative.

On 23 February, Libya wrote to the Security Council President that Iraq was ''being subjected to a deliberate process of humiliation''. It was clear, it alleged, that the intention ''behind what is now taking place is not the recovery of Kuwait'', but rather an ''operation designed to debase the Arab community, through Iraq, in the eyes of the world''.

UN Photo 158128/J. Isaac

Water supply station at the Al Abdaly refugee camp in Kuwait.

Reuters/Bettmann

Kuwait liberated, Iraq withdraws

On the evening of 23 February (EST), coalition forces launched ground operations, moving hundreds of tanks and tens of thousands of troops from positions in Saudi Arabia into Iraq and Kuwait behind thundering artillery and naval gunfire barrages.

After the start of the ground war, the Security Council held consultations in New York on 25, 26 and 27 February. Its President, Sir David Hannay of the United Kingdom, stated that many Council members wanted a clear, formal and written acceptance of all resolutions if the Council was to move forward.

On 27 February, Kuwait City was liberated. That same day, Iraq informed the Council that it would comply fully with resolution 660 and the other 11 Council resolutions. The same day, Iraq reported that all of its armed forces had withdrawn from Kuwait. It also promised to release all prisoners of war immediately after the cease-fire.

Iraq also within hours informed the Council that it had decided to comply with all relevant Council resolutions. Later, it stated that all its decisions "subsequent to 2 August 1990 regarding Kuwait are null and void".

Beginning at midnight on 28 February (EST), coalition forces were ordered to suspend offensive combat operations, the United States announced.

'Beginning of the end'

"We hope it is the beginning of the end of this terrible tragedy", said Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar a few hours later on the morning of 28 February.

Security Council President Sir David Hannay announced at Headquarters that post-war arrangements, including the lifting of sanctions and the release of prisoners of war, would be discussed in informal consultations.

For about a month, therefore, intensive diplomatic consultations took place on the terms of a permanent cease-fire, culminating on 3 April with the adoption of Security Council resolution 687 (1991).

Post-war consultations

Initial post-war consultations resulted in the adoption of resolution 686 (1991) on 2 March. By it, the Council affirmed that all 12 resolutions concerning the Iraq-Kuwait situation continued to "have full force and effect".

The Council demanded that Iraq implement those texts, in particular, that it rescind immediately the annexation of Kuwait, accept liability for loss, damage or injury arising to Kuwait or third States and their nationals and corporations, as a result of the invasion and illegal occupation of Kuwait. Seized property was to be returned.

Iraq, the Council also demanded, must cease "hostile or provocative actions" against all Member States,

UN Photo 177664/M. Grant

The vote on 2 March 1991 in the Security Council.

including missile attacks and flights of combat aircraft. Iraq had to provide, the Council said, information and assistance in identifying Iraqi mines, booby traps and other explosives, as well as any chemical and biological weapons and material in Kuwait.

Arrangements must be made for the military aspects of a cessation of hostilities "at the earliest possible time", as well as immediate access to and release of all prisoners of war. The Council welcomed the decision of Kuwait and coalition States to provide access to and commence the release of Iraqi prisoners of war.

Resolution 686—sponsored by Belgium, France, Romania, the USSR, the United Kingdom, the United States and Zaire—was adopted by 11 to 1 (Cuba), with 3 abstentions (China, India, Yemen).

Before voting, the Council rejected 17 Cuban amendments to the draft proposing, among other things, an immediate cease-fire and deployment of a UN peace-keeping force to the area. All reference to the authorization to use "all necessary means" against Iraq would have been deleted.

'No stalling tactics'

Kuwait, in debate, said it hoped that the complete implementation of the resolution would "ring down the curtain on the tragedy written, acted and directed by a regime which was born of aggression and which lived by aggression". The international community would accept no stalling tactics by the Iraqi regime, which should remember that forces allied with Kuwait had the means to impose compliance by force, if it was not forthcoming voluntarily.

The United States said the resolution turned the Council's attention from "a war we never wanted, from the tragedy precipitated by Iraq, to the greatest challenge of all: building lasting peace and security".

The USSR said the Council must completely exclude the resumption of any type of military activities. The security structure in the Persian Gulf must be based primarily on the interests of the countries in the region, which themselves must "unambiguously and clearly define their own interests".

The United Kingdom said the UN could now turn to the more difficult task of helping create a durable system of peace and security in the Gulf region and, more widely, in the Middle East.

China said the resolution fell short of referring to the Council's important role with regard to arranging and monitoring a cease-fire. The extension of the time-limit during which resolution 678 remained effective went against the desire of the peoples of all countries for an early end to the war.

France said the resolution charted the course for a final cessation of hostilities. Without the Council's determination over the past seven months, the "liberation of Kuwait" would not have been possible.

UN Photo 158125/J Isaac

Minefield on Kuwaiti beach.

Iraq agrees to comply

On 3 March, in identical letters *(S/22320* and *S/22321)* to the Security Council President and the Secretary-General, Iraq agreed to fulfil its obligations under resolution 686. Iraq's agreement to comply with Council demands stemmed from its determination "to refute the pretexts which some may employ in order to persist in their aggression against Iraq and to inflict further harm on its people".

Iraqi Foreign Minister Aziz on 5 March said that peace, stability, security and justice could not be secured in the Middle East until the Palestinians were guaranteed their legitimate right to establish their free independent State in their territory, including Jerusalem.

The "war plan" against Iraq, he said, was "an American plan". The human race was entering "a dark age", an age of domination by a "brutal super-Power over the resources of the world and the international establishment, imposing its will on them with impunity ... distorting the truth as it distorts history".

UN Photo 158134

Iraqi prisoners of war near Safwan in southern Iraq.

Kuwait on 6 March informed the Secretary-General that its Government was resuming the functions of State and "directing the affairs of the nation from Kuwait".

The day before, the Amir of Kuwait, in a letter to the Secretary-General *(S/22359)*, stated: "Despite the overwhelming disaster that has befallen Kuwait, we now find some comfort in the fact that the international unity that came into being to repel the aggression has strengthened the position of the UN as an effective international organization."

A powerful deterrent

The measures taken to restore justice now constitute "an international precedent", he concluded, "a powerful deterrent to any overwhelming regime that feels tempted to swoop down upon a smaller State in order to engulf and control it".

He said: "The people of Kuwait join me in expressing profound appreciation and immense gratitude towards the international community, represented by the United Nations, for its noble stand on the side of right and law." He also praised the "untiring personal efforts and the noble and scrupulous stand" taken by the Secretary-General for the application of the Council resolutions.

Other concerns

On 3 March, in a statement by the Security Council *(S/22322)*, the Sanctions Committee, established under resolution 661 (1990), was called on to continue to act promptly on requests submitted to it for humanitarian assistance stemming from the situation between Iraq and Kuwait.

Between 6 August 1990 and 16 May 1991, that Committee met 40 times, considering aid requests from 21 countries, each of which had detailed the consequences of the conflict on its economy.

On 22 March, the Sanctions Committee decided to lift the embargo on civilian and humanitarian imports to Iraq. It said that circumstances had arisen in which there was an "urgent humanitarian need" to supply foodstuffs to Iraq in order to relieve human suffering.

During and after the war, other humanitarian and related issues were discussed at the United Nations.

Kuwait, during the occupation by Iraq, had registered numerous complaints alleging human rights violations.

As late as 22 February, Kuwait had reported that Iraqi occupation forces were rounding up Kuwaiti citizens and transporting them to Iraq.

Treatment of prisoners of war and third-country nationals was also a matter of concern. On 17 January, the ICRC had reminded all the parties to the conflict of their commitments as signatories to the 1949 Geneva Convention on the protection of civilians in time of war. The use of chemical and bacteriological weapons, as well as atomic weapons, was prohibited under the international humanitarian law, it stressed.

Kuwait, France, the United Kingdom and the United States were among those protesting Iraq's stated intention to hold prisoners of war as hostages or use them as human shields, in violation of the 1949 Third Geneva Convention.

After the hostilities had ended, Iraq began on 4 March to release prisoners of war it had been holding, with 45—among them Americans, British, French, Italians, Kuwaitis and Saudi Arabians—released to the ICRC by 5 March.

On 13 March, Kuwait complained that only 1,200 of the 33,000 prisoners of war, as of that date, had been released.

Special missions assess war damage

Two high-level missions were dispatched to Kuwait and Iraq in March to investigate the consequences of the war.

A UN inter-agency mission, led by Under-Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari, visited Iraq from 10 to 17 March and Kuwait from 23 to 27 March. Its purpose: to assess humanitarian needs in the "immediate post-crisis environment".

A second special mission, led by former Under-Secretary-General Abdulrahim A. Farah, visited Kuwait from 18 March through 4 April, to gain information on losses of life, Iraqi practices against civilians and damage to Kuwait's infrastructure.

The Ahtisaari mission reported *(S/22409)* that Kuwait had been "scarred by the ravages of illegal occupation and, subsidiarily, of war". A deliberate attempt had been made to extinguish Kuwaiti national identity; there had been "coordinated vandalism" and massive looting, it stated.

At least two thirds of Kuwait's estimated 2.3 million population were now scattered throughout the world. There was prolific evidence of arson and malicious destruction of homes, businesses, markets, museums and libraries, the report said.

Kuwait's oil industry would take longest to restore, it went on. Oil wells on fire were spewing flames, which created thick clouds of oily, dark smoke that brought "a chilly twilight" at noon, as well as "still-uncharted perils to health".

'Near apocalyptic'

As for Iraq, the Ahtisaari mission reported *(S/22366)* that the effect of the conflict on Iraq's economic infrastructure had been "near-apocalyptic". Until January 1991, it had been "a rather highly urbanized and mechanized society"; now most means of modern life support had been destroyed or "rendered tenuous".

The country had been relegated to "a pre-industrial age". Severe fuel shortages curtailed transportation, irrigation and the use of power generators to pump water and sewage. Some 90 per cent of the industrial work force had been "reduced to inactivity". Food supplies were becoming scarce. Communicatons systems had been destroyed.

UN Photo 177709/M Grant

Mr. Ahtisaari reports at Headquarters on 22 March.

The mission recommended a "major mobilization and movement of resources" to deal with aspects of the crisis in agriculture and food, water, sanitation and health. Many of its recommendations confirmed those of a joint World Health Organization/UN Children's Fund team which visited Iraq from 16 to 21 February, delivering a 54-ton shipment of emergency medical supplies for children and mothers.

'Nerve centres' struck

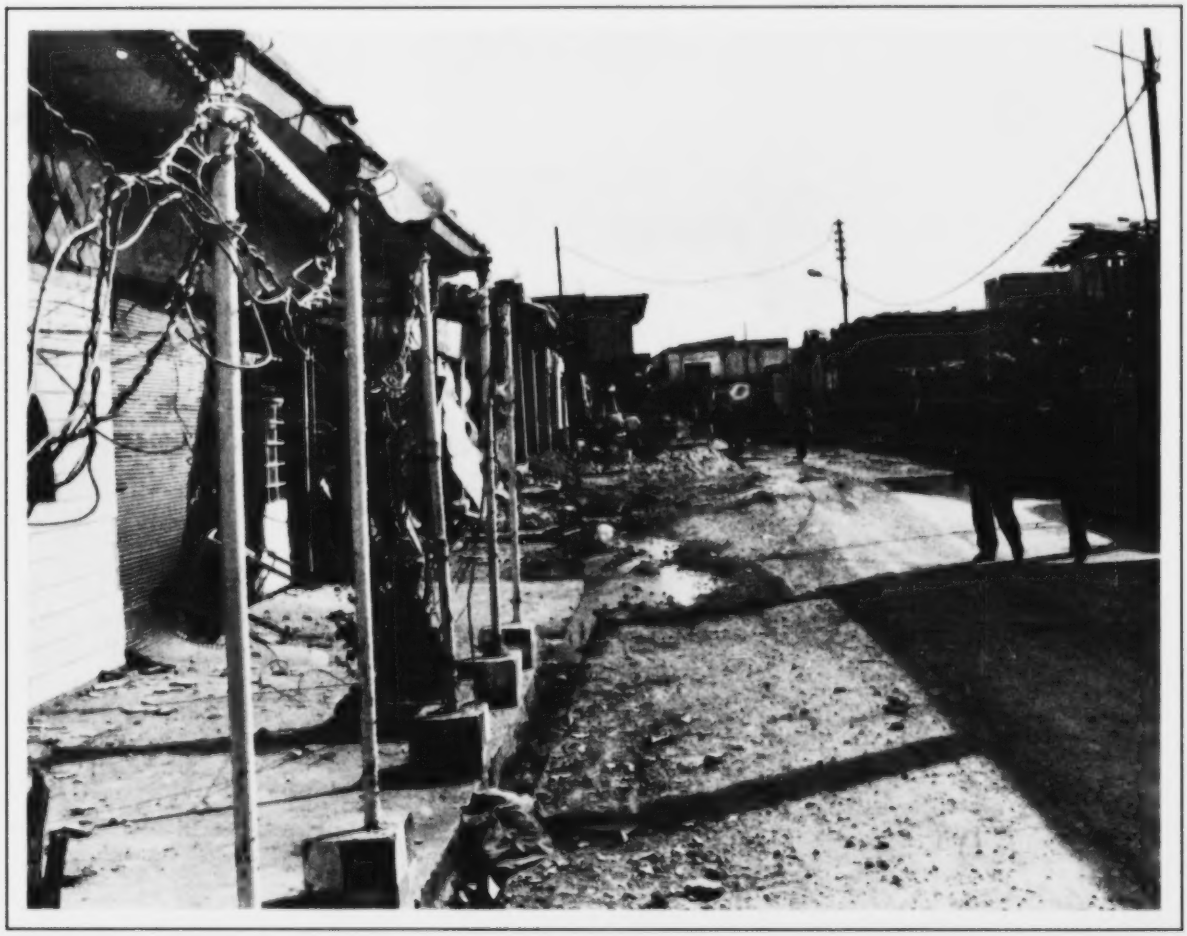
After his mission, Mr. Farah reported on 4 April that widespread military vandalism in occupied Kuwait had struck at the "nerve-centres" of the nation. His team had been informed that the Kuwaiti Centre for the Registration of Missing Persons had compiled a list of more than 11,000 missing persons. A UN expert was to be appointed to advise on ways to coordinate and present information on the human rights element of the Farah mission mandate.

UN Photo 158154/J Isaac

Kuwaiti factory owner shows war damage to mission leader Farah.

The 'spoils' of war

Damaged economies . . .
Devastated ecologies . . .



Reuters/Bettmann

A street in Diwaniyah, Iraq.

A full, dispassionate assessment of environmental and economic damage resulting from the Gulf war is still under way. Predictions at the start of the war in January ranged from the apocalyptic to the naively optimistic. Oil spills may wipe out the rich marine ecology of the Gulf and disable Saudi Arabian desalination plants, which provide drinking water to some 10 million people, many experts feared.

The oil well fires, raging since late February, may create a kind of global "nuclear winter", it has been stated. Others have said that "smart weapons" and "surgical strikes" would inflict relatively low-level ecological and economic pain on the region and, ultimately, the world at large.

UN Photo 158124/J. Isaac

The environmental front

In March, 4 million to 6 million barrels of oil were reported burning off each day at some 500 Kuwaiti oil wells. The United States said that coalition forces had "physical evidence that these fires were deliberately set by Iraqi forces". Iraq denied the charge.

On 28 February, Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar called the oil slick in the Persian Gulf "an ecological catastrophe of major proportions".

Saudi Arabia charged Iraq with spilling more than 10 million barrels of crude oil into the Gulf waters. Coral reefs, seaweed, tortoises and sea turtles, sea and shore birds, fish and non-vertebrates, sandy beaches and lagoons were threatened, Saudi Arabia said. Iraq put the blame on United States aircraft which, it claimed, had bombed two Iraqi tankers.

The oil slick was estimated at 1 million barrels by a scientific team sent to Saudi Arabia in February by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). The team confirmed that "extensive damage" had been inflicted to some sensitive coastal eco-systems, including mangroves, fishery breeding grounds and habitats of endangered species. It also noted that environmental information related to the Gulf hostilities was "controversial and often contradictory".

In March, UNEP set up a task force to carry out a 90-day in-depth survey and assessment of environmental damage in the region. The study will be carried out by experts from UNEP, the World Health Organization and the World Meteorological Organization, in association with the Regional Organisation for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Governments of the region.

Data will be collected on the nature and content of emissions from the blazing Kuwaiti oil wells. Oil poilution affecting human populations, ecosystems, living marine resources and coastal infrastructure will be monitored. A third focus of concern will be "terrestrial destruction", that is, damage to food, soil and agriculture.

William A. O'Neil, Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization on 5 March called for the establishment of an international fund to clean up the oil spill in the Gulf.

Economic shock waves

By the end of March 1991, the economic shock waves around the world, particularly in 21 severely affected countries, and widespread damage to Iraq's infrastructure seemed to tip the balance toward the ominous side.

On 22 March, the most severely affected countries appealed for help directly to the Security Council *(S/22382)*, saying they had lost more than $30 billion as a result of compliance with Council-ordered sanctions against Iraq.

These countries are: Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Djibouti, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Yemen and Yugoslavia.

International response to earlier appeals on their behalf made by the Secretary-General, on the recommendation of the Council's Sanctions Committee, was insufficient, they said.

The Council created the Committee to monitor implementation of sanctions against Iraq under Council resolution 661 (1990), as well as the economic impact on UN Member States. Peter Hohenfellner of Austria has been elected Committee Chairman for 1991.

Affected countries reported their economic troubles to the Sanctions Committee. For example, India said

that it had spent $210 million repatriating 130,000 of its 200,000 nationals stranded in Iraq and Kuwait. Rehabilitation costs were estimated at $720 million. India calculated that the total impact of the war on its balance of payments in 1991 could reach $2.8 billion.

Sri Lanka expected a $37 million loss in export earnings in 1991 due to falling prices of tea, a major source of foreign exchange earnings. The price drop followed the loss of the Iraqi and Kuwaiti markets due to the war. Sri Lanka estimated the total losses to its economy through the end of 1993 to be "well beyond $1 billion".

Yugoslavia claimed losses in 1990 of $1.3 billion, including $225 million owed by Iraq and $50 million owed by Kuwait for goods and services. Iraq was an important trading and business partner of Yugoslavia.

The war jeopardized an Iraqi offer to Djibouti, a least developed country, of a $25.5 million grant for 150 low-cost housing units and a $5.5 million grant to plant 55,000 date palms as part of an environmental project.

Oil shortages widespread

The major economic impact of the Gulf war around the world was due to the cost of additional oil imports—about $2 billion for Eastern Europe and $8 billion for the developing world, Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs Rafeeuddin Ahmed reported on 25 March. There had been oil shortages, rationing and loss of economic output in many countries, he added.

The UN Conference on Trade and Development reported on 21 March that during Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, sub-Saharan countries lost an extra $1 billion.

Some Asian countries—especially Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand—lost nearly $1.5 billion in remittances from citizens living and working in the Gulf region.

Some 2 million of the 2.8 million migrant workers and their families in Iraq and Kuwait had fled the area by early February 1991, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Yemen asked for ILO help to cope with resettlement and employment problems created by the sudden return of hundreds of thousands of migrant workers.

In spite of financial constraints, ILO was already blueprinting several technical cooperation projects, including one to retrain 12,000 Sri Lankan women who had worked as housemaids in the Gulf area, as garment workers in their own country.

Ilter Turkmen, Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East on 4 March reported that some 150,000 of the 350,000 Palestinians working in Kuwait had fled to Jordan, many leaving behind lucrative jobs.

UNIIMOG mandate terminated by Security Council

In consultations held on 27 February, Security Council members accepted Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar's recommendation to let the mandate of the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) expire. The recommendation was contained in the Secretary-General's report *(S/22263)* of 26 February.

The Secretary-General came to this conclusion, having reported the completion of the withdrawal of forces of the two sides to the internationally recognized boundaries, as described in the 13 June 1975 Treaty Concerning the State Frontier and Neighbourly Relations between Iran and Iraq and its protocols and annexes.

UN Photo 172151/J. Isaac

There remained the question, he said, of establishing an area of separation and an area of limitation of armaments which, pending negotiation of a comprehensive settlement, could help reduce tension and build confidence between the parties. Both had informed UNIIMOG that they had begun—and in Iraq's case, had completed—the establishment of the area of separation.

The Observer Group was established on 9 August 1988 to supervise a UN-sponsored cease-fire and troop withdrawals in the area. On 25 February, its strength was 114 observers from 18 countries.

Discuss plan for comprehensive settlement of Cambodian conflict

UN Photo 112863

Cambodian Village on the Tonle Sap River.

Extensive discussions were held in February in Hanoi on the draft plan for a comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodian conflict.

Ali Alatas of Indonesia and Edwige Avice of France, Co-Presidents of the Paris Conference on Cambodia, met with Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach on 1 and 2 February. Rafeeuddin Ahmed, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, was also present.

The Vietnamese side reiterated its acceptance of the 28 August 1990 framework document of the five permanent members of the Security Council as the basis for settling the conflict. All sides agreed that there must be full respect for the sovereignty of the Cambodian nation.

Viet Nam also welcomed the results of the meeting between the 12 members of the Cambodian Supreme National Council (SNC) and the two Co-Presidents and Mr. Ahmed in Paris from 21 to 23 December 1990. It reaffirmed its willingness to support the efforts of the Co-Presidents to resolve remaining issues.

To enable the Paris Conference to reconvene in an atmosphere propitious to national reconciliation, all parties to the conflict must exercise genuine restraint, it was stated.

The Co-Presidents reported they had formally presented the 26 November 1990 draft agreements on a comprehensive political settlement to SNC members who, in turn, reiterated their acceptance in its entirety of the framework document formulated in August by the Council's permanent members as the basis for settling the Cambodia conflict. There was concurrence on most fundamental points of the 26 November draft.

On 28 February, Viet Nam reported *(A/46/115-S/22347)* that the settlement of the Cambodian issue was entering a decisive stage. It wanted practical and effective measures to prevent an escalation of the civil war and to accelerate a peaceful settlement.

Although some problems relating to Cambodia's internal affairs had yet to be resolved, the possibility for an overall political solution based on respect for Cambodia's sovereignty had been opened up, Viet Nam stated.

Some $17 million for the Cambodian relief programme was pledged by nine donor countries on 22 January at a day-long donor meeting at UN Headquarters in New York. Pledges were made to support a $56.2 million budget of the United Nations Border Relief Operation for 1991, as well as humanitarian assistance inside Cambodia. Pledges were made by Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, Norway and the United States.

ANTI-APARTHEID NOTES

South African steps to dismantle apartheid system welcomed

Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar on 4 February said that the address of South African President F. W. de Klerk at the opening of the South African Parliament on 1 February "advances further the process of removing statutory apartheid from the country's institutional framework".

He hoped that those "constructive initiatives" would be accompanied by "measures giving substantive effect to the removal of the main pillars of apartheid and by the resolution of a number of outstanding issues required for the commencement of negotiations".

President de Klerk had announced that he would scrap the remaining laws on which South Africa's ideology of racial discrimination had long rested. Legislation was to be introduced to repeal the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, which reserved most of the country's land for the white minority, the Group Areas Act of 1966 and the Black Communities Act of 1984, which had structured the separate status of black townships.

The Population Registration Act, which classifies all South Africans into four racial groups—black, white, people of mixed race and Asian—would also soon be eliminated through the enactment of what he described as "temporary, transitional measures" needed to maintain the present Constitution, until a new one could be negotiated and drafted.

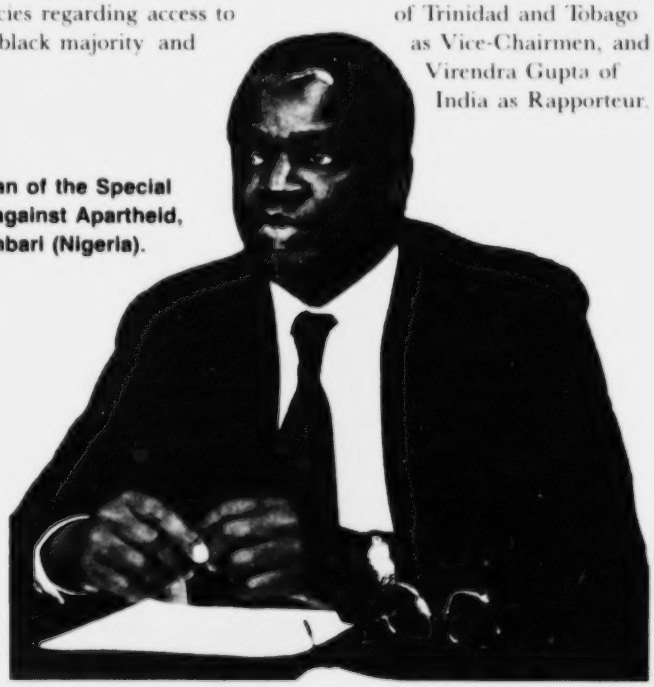
"Should Parliament adopt the Government's proposals", Mr. de Klerk stated, "the South African statute book will be devoid, within months, of the remnants of racially discriminatory legislation which have become known as the cornerstone of apartheid." South Africa could not allow or permit the "dynamic process of reform" to slow down.

On 5 February, Ibrahim Gambari of Nigeria, Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid, welcomed the envisioned measures as part of "the ongoing process of bringing about fundamental change in South Africa".

The Committee favoured substantive policies regarding access to land by the black majority and programmes of affirmative action to redress the socio-economic inequities in education, housing, health and employment.

He noted that the right of all South Africans to vote and be voted for was still to be realized. Appropriate pressure should be maintained on South Africa during the negotiation process towards preparation and adoption of a new constitution, he concluded.

Mr. Gambari was re-elected as Special Committee Chairman for 1991 at its first meeting of the year on 31 January. Also re-elected were Jai Pratap Rana of Nepal, Guennadi I. Oudovenko of the Ukrainian SSR and Marjorie R. Thorpe of Trinidad and Tobago as Vice-Chairmen, and Virendra Gupta of India as Rapporteur.



The Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid, Ibrahim Gambari (Nigeria).

Photo 177443/M. Grant

International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination observed

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was observed at a solemn meeting of the Special Committee against Apartheid on 21 March at Headquarters. Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar said that, through negotiations, apartheid should be replaced with a system based on equality, democracy and the rule of law. All parties had a responsibility to do their utmost to end the "profoundly disturbing" violence raging in South Africa. The consolidation of a climate conducive to free political activity—essential for the process of negotiations—would also help to develop a culture of democracy and respect for human rights in South Africa.

Sanctions having adverse impact on South African economy

Sanctions against South Africa were having an adverse impact on that country's economy, according to a team of independent experts appointed in 1989 by the International Labour Organisation to monitor the implementation of sanctions and other action against apartheid. In a report published in March 1991, the experts also stated that sanctions had not been universal and that further pressure was needed. A total ban on trade credits and a coordinated position by banks and Governments towards rescheduling South Africa's debt were recommended.

Group monitoring oil shipments to Pretoria holds first meeting of 1991

The Intergovernmental Group to Monitor the Supply and Shipping of Oil and Petroleum Products to South Africa at its first meeting of 1991 on 26 March re-elected Anthony B. Nyakyi of the United Republic of Tanzania as Chairman. Also re-elected were Nabeela Al-Mulla of Kuwait as Vice-Chairman and Sverre Bergh Johansen of Norway as Rapporteur.

Chairman Nyakyi told the Group that recent estimates of South Africa's foreign oil needs far surpassed those reported by the Government and demonstrated the potential effectiveness of the ban in the struggle against apartheid. While South Africa had attempted to achieve energy self-sufficiency, it had reportedly spent more than $25 billion to cover its oil requirements.

UNHCR to play role in return of South African exiles

The Government of South Africa has agreed in principle that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) should participate in the voluntary return of South African refugees and exiles. High Commissioner Sadako Ogata welcomed the important development which would allow UNHCR to ensure that refugees and exiles returned under safe conditions. An adequate and effective UNHCR presence would be established in South Africa to discharge its responsibilities, after agreement on the principles and modalities for the repatriation exercise.

UN Photo 151602

Apartheid: A system on the way out.

Help for victims of apartheid discussed

The Committee of Trustees of the UN Trust Fund for South Africa on 28 February discussed ways to help victims of apartheid in South Africa through current and future programmes for legal, humanitarian, educational and relief assistance to such victims. The Trust Fund, established by the Assembly in 1965 and financed by voluntary contributions from Governments, organizations and individuals, has made over the years some $40 million in grants to such programmes.

Participants included representatives of voluntary assistance organizations, lawyers and representatives of national human rights and lawyers' associations from South Africa.

Protection of Palestinians remains a UN concern

The protection of Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation remained a grave preoccupation of the international community, Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar told the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People at its opening session on 6 February.

Although the world was preoccupied with the crisis in the area of the Persian Gulf, it should not turn its attention from the question of Palestine. That, he said, was the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which touched, directly or indirectly, millions of people and many countries.

In the first three months of 1991, there were a number of developments related to the UN role in the Middle East, including Security Council action on the Palestinian situation.

Council President Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya of Zaire on 4 January read a statement on members' behalf, following consultations on the situation in the occupied Arab territories.

Council members deplored the "recent acts of violence in Gaza, especially actions by Israeli security forces against Palestinians, which led to scores of casualties among those civilians".

They reaffirmed the applicability of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention—which calls for the protection of civilians during time of war—to all Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem, and asked that Israel, the occupying Power, fully comply with the Convention's provisions.

They continued to support Council resolution 681 (1990), which calls for the monitoring and observation of the situation of Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation.

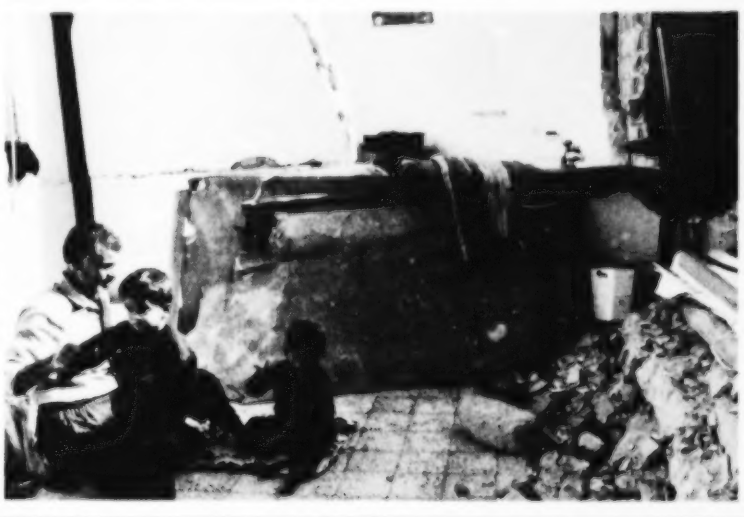
Palestinians expelled

On 8 January, the Secretary-General strongly deplored Israel's decision to expel four Palestinians from the occupied territories. The action, he said, directly contravened the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israeli authorities should permit those who had been deported to return to their homes, he stated.

The International Committee of the Red Cross reported that those expulsions had brought to 66 the number of persons expelled from the occupied territories since the beginning of the *intifadah*—the Palestinian uprising—in December 1987.

On 27 March, Council members deplored another Israeli decision to expel four Palestinian civilians from the occupied territories and called upon it to desist from deporting Palestinians from the territories and to ensure the safe return of those deported. Two were employees of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Council President Peter Hohenfellner of Austria made the statement following consultations.

In it, Council members expressed grave concern over the continued deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories, "and especially by the current serious situation resulting from the imposition of curfews by Israel".



UN Photo 157976/J. Isaac

The deteriorating situation in the occupied territories is of grave concern to Security Council members.

Israel objects

Israel has categorically objected to the idea of convening a meeting of the high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, as advocated by the Secretary-General in December 1990.

On 21 March, Israel called the proposal "an astonishing act of singling out Israel". In the 40 years the Convention had been in effect, it said, millions of innocent civilians had been killed, and the international community had not once seen fit to convene the signatories to address the violations. Israel had undertaken to apply all the humanitarian provisions of the Convention on a de facto basis. A meeting of the parties would only politicize an international humanitarian law instrument and thereby undermine its effectiveness, Israel stated *(S/22378)*.

UNIFIL mandate renewed until 31 July 1991

The mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was extended for a further six-month period until 31 July 1991 by a unanimous decision of the Security Council on 30 January. The 13-year-old UN peace-keeping force, currently numbering 5,853, is commanded by Lieutenant-General Lars-Eric Wahlgren of Sweden.

In resolution 684 (1991), the Council reiterated its strong support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries. All parties concerned were called on to co-operate fully with the Force for the full implementation of its mandate.

The Secretary-General stressed that the Force's financial situation was grave. Unpaid assessments remained at the unacceptably high level of $281.7 million. He said Member States should pay their assessments promptly and in full, and all remaining arrears should be cleared.

Assembly President visits camps

From 3 to 7 January 1991, Guido de Marco of Malta, President of the forty-fifth General Assembly, visited Palestine refugee camps in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jordan. He is the first Assembly President ever to visit such camps. UNRWA Commissioner-General Giorgio Giacomelli accompanied him.

Mr. de Marco also met with high-level Israeli officials to discuss the question of Palestine refugees.

At a press conference in Amman, Jordan, on 7 January, the President described the high state of tension in the occupied territories as "a powder keg" and urged the implementation of UN resolutions calling for an international peace conference on the Middle East as a means to defuse it. He also called on UN Member States to increase their financial support for UNRWA, which provides education, health and social services to the refugees under increasingly difficult conditions.

Turkmen new head of UNRWA

Ilter Turkmen on 4 March assumed his post as Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). He succeeds Giorgio Giacomelli of Italy who has been appointed Executive Director of the UN International Drug Control Programme.

Mr. Turkmen, a former Foreign Minister of Turkey, most recently had been his country's Ambassador to France. He had also represented Turkey at the UN in New York (1975-1978 and 1985-1988) and in Geneva (1983-1985). From 1979 to 1980, he served as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Thailand, dealing with humanitarian issues.

He has also been Ambassador to the Soviet Union and Greece. UNRWA is a UN agency with the largest staff, numbering 18,500, mainly teachers and health workers, providing services to more than 2.4 million registered Palestine refugees in Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan and the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Jarring retires as Special Representative to Middle East

Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar on 21 March designated Edouard Brunner of Switzerland as Special Representative to the Middle East, in accordance with Security Council resolution 242 (1967), adopted by the Council on 22 November 1967. Mr. Brunner succeeds Gunnar Jarring, who has served in that capacity since 1967.

In resolution 242, the Council had asked the Secretary-General to designate a Special Representative to establish and maintain contacts with the States concerned to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement, in accordance with the provisions and principles in the resolution.

Born in Berne, Switzerland, in 1932, Mr. Brunner is his country's Ambassador to the United States. He was Switzerland's State Secretary for Foreign Affairs from 1984 to 1989. He also served as Deputy Permanent Observer to the UN (1975-1978).

Talks continue to settle Afghan question

Two high-level UN officials—Benon Sevan, Personal Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Giandomenico Picco, Assistant for Special Assignments, Executive Office of the Secretary-General—arrived in Moscow on 10 March for talks with Soviet authorities concerning a political settlement of the Afghan question. The meetings were part of the regular ongoing contacts with the Soviet Government that had begun in 1989.

Later in March, Mr. Sevan met with Pakistan President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Foreign Secretary Shahervar Khan. He also consulted with Afghan resistance leaders.

Before leaving for Moscow, Mr. Sevan had met with President Najibullah of Afghanistan in Kabul and with Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan in Islamabad.

Also in March, Afghanistan alleged that "extremist" Afghan opposition and Pakistani forces had attacked the province of Khost and certain points along the Afghanistan-Pakistani border.

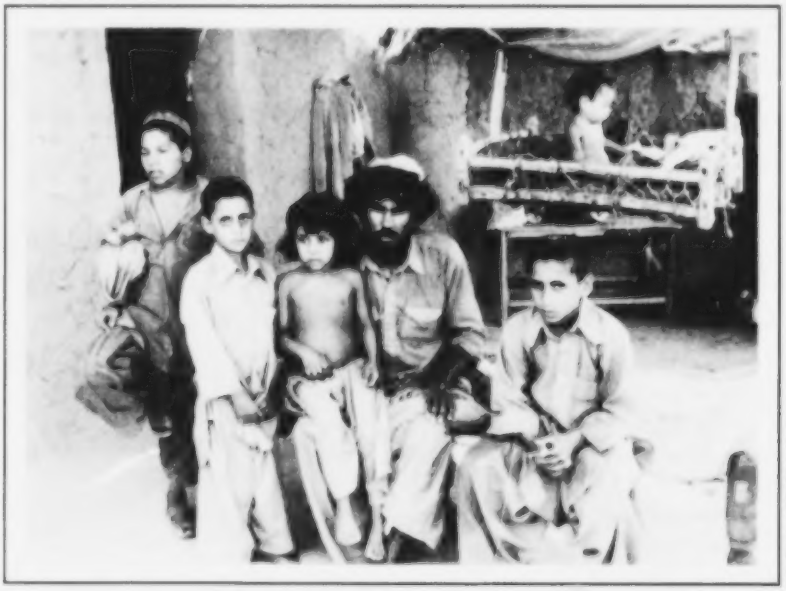
Both Afghanistan and Pakistan wanted a UN mission to look into the situation. On 1 April, the Secretary-General expressed deep concern over the continued fighting and loss of lives and devastation in Afghanistan. All Afghans should put their national interest above all other interests to resolve their differences through a political process, to ensure the exercise of their right to self-determination and establish a broad-based government, which would enjoy the confidence of the vast majority of the Afghan people.

Appeal for aid

On 26 February, Mr. Sevan appealed to the international community for additional contributions for emergency relief to Afghanistan. "Fighting and death, hunger and malnutrition, environmental degradation, destroyed towns and villages, exploded mines and ordnances remain part of the Afghan daily experience." Resources required for the implementation of programmes and projects for 1991 amount to $232.4 million, with priority placed on agriculture, food aid, mine clearance, health and voluntary repatriation. At the end of March, however, over $80 million were still needed to be raised for the priority sectors alone.

Seven countries—the United States, Canada, Sweden, Australia, Finland, Germany and Italy—in January announced new contributions to "Operation Salam", a programme of emergency relief and rehabilitation in Afghanistan, implemented by UN agencies, volunteers and local and international non-governmental organizations, which began in May 1988.

Should further funds not be forthcoming, said Mr. Sevan, it would be necessary to scale down or even abandon some essential activities. "To abandon the Afghan people at the crucial hour may well mean jeopardizing the precarious progress achieved both in the economic sphere and towards a political settlement in Afghanistan. Such an eventuality might well have serious repercussions in the region as a whole."



UN Photo 156450/J. Isaac

The UN has appealed for additional contributions for emergency relief to Afghanistan. *Above*, a family in a refugee camp.

Cooperation urged to resolve outstanding issues over Cyprus

Security Council members on 28 March urged all th[illegible] concerned with the situation in Cyprus to cooperate fully with Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar and to continue discussions that had taken place over the past few months in order to resolve the outstanding issues without delay.

Members' views were reflected in a statement issued, following Council consultations, by Council President Peter Hohenfellner of Austria.

The Secretary-General reported that current conditions for an overall agreement were "favourable". He noted that over the past few months, his effort was supported by discussions between one of his aides and a senior official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. He stressed the importance that these talks continue. The Secretary-General stated that it would be possible to reach an agreed outline in "a few months" if progress is made on the key outstanding issues, namely: territorial adjustments; freedom of settlement; and displaced persons.

Council members said they fully supported the Secretary-General's mission of good offices in Cyprus. They agreed with his assessment of the current situation, including the main issues that remained to be clarified before an outline of an overall agreement could be completed.

Members reaffirmed Council resolution 649 (1990) of 12 March 1990 and the Secretary General's mandate, as set out in resolution 367 (1975). Resolution 649 reaffirmed, in particular, the provisions of resolution 367, as well as the Council's support for the 1977 and 1979 high-level agreements between the leaders of the two communities. That should "continue to serve as the basis for the Secretary-General's effort to arrive at an agreed outline", the Council members stated.

The Secretary-General's intention to report further by early July 1991 on his effort to arrive at an agreed outline was welcomed.

Western Sahara solution appears within reach

Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar on 21 February assured the Special Committee on decolonization that his continued efforts towards implementation of the peace plan for Western Sahara would lead to a peaceful, fair and lasting solution to the problem, including a UN-supervised referendum on self-determination.

Opening the first meeting of the Committee in 1991, he expressed hope that the parties—Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (POLISARIO Front)—would continue to accord particular attention to all issues regarding the plan's implementation. Given their cooperation and political will, a solution would now be within reach, he said.

On 19 April, the Secretary-General issued his report *(S/22464)* on the situation concerning Western Sahara, pursuant to Security Council resolution 658 (1990) of 27 June 1990. Among other things, the report addressed each of the main elements of the implementation plan provided by the Secretary-General to implement the settlement proposals accepted by Morocco and POLISARIO on 30 August 1988 *(S/21360)*. It amplified the information contained in document S/21360 regarding the personnel and financial requirements and the proposed timetable and plan of action of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, to be known by its French acronym MINURSO.

Under the settlement plan unanimously approved by resolution 658, the UN would supervise a cease-fire between Morocco and POLISARIO, and conduct a referendum by which the Western Sahara people would choose between independence and integration with Morocco.

MINURSO, headed by Johannes Manz, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, will comprise an integrated support group of UN civilian, military and security units. Among its tasks: to set up a commission on identification to review and update the 1974 census and establish the number of Saharans living in the Territory and the number of Saharan refugees and non-residents qualified to participate in the referendum.

MINURSO would then oversee the repatriation of Saharan refugees, in cooperation with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. It would also ensure that any discriminatory laws affecting the holding of a fair and free referendum would be suspended. Political detainees would be released.

ONUVEH mission in Haiti ends with success

UN Photo 177244/M. Grant

ONUVEH Chief João Augusto de Medicis *(right)* greets polling-station workers on election day.

The last contingent of the UN Observer Group for the Verification of the Elections in Haiti (ONUVEH) left that Caribbean country on 22 February, after the Group successfully saw the nation through its first free and democratic elections and the peaceful inauguration of President-elect Jean-Bertrand Aristide on 7 February.

An attempted *coup d'état* by Roger Lafontant, a former Minister of the Interior under "President for Life" Jean-Claude Duvalier and who was excluded from the presidential race, was the only serious incident before the second round of the elections.

ONUVEH reported that the coup attempt on 6 January was "unanimously rejected" by the international community and quickly foiled by "the strong reaction of the population and its mobilization in urban centres", and the condemnation of the military high command. More than 70 people died and many were injured in violent street clashes in Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital, and Cap Haitien on the northern coast.

Participation in the 16 December balloting in which President Aristide was elected by a landslide was very high. However, voters showed "relative apathy" in the second round held on 20 January to elect senators, deputies and local officers, ONUVEH reported. In spite of some irregularities, the population was able "to vote freely and without fear", as it had in the first round, it stated.

In the second round, some 100 ONUVEH observers were deployed in the country's nine departments, visiting more than 1,200 polling stations—10 per cent of the total. The security observers closely followed the implementation of security measures by the Haitian authorities.

ONUVEH was the first UN election monitoring operation in an independent nation not involved in a regional conflict. The Group played a pivotal role in helping to create a climate of security conducive to the holding of democratic elections in a country still traumatized by the 1987 elections, which were cancelled after the Duvalierists unleashed a campaign of terror against voters and candidates.

UN prepares El Salvador mission

An advance group, charged by Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar with assessing conditions in El Salvador, returned to New York on 23 March after a 10-day visit to that war-torn Central American country. The group was to advise the Secretary-General on how a UN human rights verification mission could function there even before a cease-fire is in place.

The mission is to verify the Agreement on Human Rights signed in San José, Costa Rica, in July 1990 by the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional. It would be the initial component of the UN Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), a complex operation assembled to oversee a cease-fire and other agreements that are still being negotiated by the parties, with Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar playing an increasingly active role as intermediary.

The advance group was headed by Iqbal Riza, Director of the Office of the Secretary-General, assisted by Ricardo Vigil, Chief of the UN Preparatory Office in San Salvador. It included four human rights experts and three military and police advisers from six countries.

Charter Committee drafts declaration on UN fact-finding activities

Fact-finding missions to troubled areas may soon become another powerful tool in the UN arsenal to maintain international peace and security. A declaration that defines and institutionalizes the use of such missions—not only to gather information but also to signal concern over a potentially explosive situation and thus help defuse it—is expected to be adopted by the General Assembly later in 1991.

The draft declaration was adopted without a vote by the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization at the end of its three-week session (4-22 February, New York).

Fact-finding missions have been sent by the UN to a number of trouble-spots over the past 45 years, on a pragmatic, occasional, case-by-case basis. The declaration sets clear, legal and political parameters for fact-finding, stresses its value and opens the door for more comprehensive, ongoing use of this tool, particularly by the Secretary-General.

Fact-finding should be "comprehensive, objective and impartial", the declaration states. It should be used at the earliest possible stage to prevent disputes. Fact-finding missions may be undertaken by the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, with the consent of the "receiving State". Nations, however, are asked to receive and cooperate with these missions. Refusals to do so should be explained.

The Secretary-General should monitor conflicts which may threaten international peace and security, and bring relevant information to the attention of the Council. He should be able to mount an emergency mission in case of need. The Secretariat's early warning capability should be enhanced.

To help settle disputes

A 180-page handbook on the settlement of disputes was also approved by the 47-member Committee. A compilation of international legal expertise, the subjects covered range from the conduct of negotiations to launching good offices procedure, to functions of conciliation and costs of arbitration. The text, prepared by the Secretariat and a consultative group over the past six years, was reviewed by the Assembly's Sixth Committee. Committee members asked that it be distributed widely, in connection with the UN Decade of International Law (1990-1999).

The Committee also considered a USSR working paper on enhancing cooperation between the UN and regional organizations. It calls for expanding the role of regional groups to include contributing to political, economic and humanitarian aspects of security, and specifies the need for Security Council authorization should regional groups seek to take enforcement action in case of conflicts.

A Libyan working paper, also before the Committee, proposed to end the veto power available to all five permanent members of the Council by changing the Charter's unanimity provision.

UN Photo 158313/J Isaac

A recent fact-finding mission to northern Iraq.

Conference on Disarmament concludes first part of annual session

UN Photo 177354

Opening session of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva in January 1991.

The crisis in the Persian Gulf area was a poignant reminder of "the truth that peace and stability in international relations rest on full respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations", Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar told the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament, as the first part (22 January-28 March) of its three-part 1991 session opened.

In a message read by Conference Secretary-General Miljan Komatina, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said that developments in the field of arms limitation and disarmament had "created conditions for an enlarged and enhanced role for the United Nations in evolving new concepts of international security", one that should be "commensurate with its increased responsibilities in the peace-making and peace-keeping fields".

The 39-member body, which adopts its decisions by consensus, is the world's single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. It is currently composed of the five nuclear-weapon States (China, France, Soviet Union, United Kingdom and United States) and 34 non-nuclear-weapon States.

On the Conference agenda are: nuclear-test ban, cessation of the nuclear-arms race and nuclear disarmament; prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters; chemical weapons; prevention of an arms race in outer space; effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons; and a comprehensive programme of disarmament.

The Conference's Ad Hoc Committees on chemical weapons,

radiological weapons, negative security assurances, a nuclear-test ban, and prevention of an arms race in outer space were re-established during the session.

The second and third parts of its 1991 session are scheduled for 14 May to 27 June and 23 July to 4 September, respectively.

Debate: Focus on Gulf

Addressing the Conference on 22 January, Maj. Britt Theorin, Chairman of the Swedish Disarmament Commission, noted the "irony of history" that weapons in Iraq's arsenal were being turned against some of their suppliers. Chemical weapons had to be destroyed "once and for all", she said, adding that a total ban on those weapons should be concluded urgently.

Ali Akbar Velayati, Iran's Foreign Minister, said on 14 February that the Persian Gulf had become the "test site" for the most destructive weapons of the present time. It was clear, he stressed, that the war would not solve problems, but would exacerbate existing inequalities and injustices, leading to an escalated arms race.

A tranquil and stable "European house" was closely connected with a successful continuation of negotiations on conventional forces in Europe, Hungarian Foreign Minister Geza Jeszensky told the Conference on 20 February.

Nuclear and chemical threats were not the only dangers facing mankind, he stated. Conventional disarmament should be added to the disarmament agenda. The Conference could provide a framework for an exchange of information on conventional force levels and measures to reduce them, Mr. Jeszensky said.

Chemical weapons convention

Serguei B. Batsanov of the USSR, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons and the current Conference President, in a press conference said the Gulf war had demonstrated that the Conference was "rather late" on concluding a chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Hyltenius of Sweden said that political issues involved in drafting the chemical weapons convention had been addressed much more than in the past. The most comprehensive efforts, he said, had been made on undiminished security and universal adherence. An increased number of non-member States of the Conference had participated in the negotiations, a "good sign for its future", he added.

The Netherlands and Canada reported on their joint trial challenge inspection of a military facility, which they had carried out in connection with verification aspects of a future chemical weapons convention.

Hendrik Wagenmakers of the Netherlands said the exercise showed that under circumstances of managed access, sensitive information could be adequately protected at the military site, while the team could still obtain enough information to draw reliable conclusions on the presence of chemical weapons.

Nuclear Tests

Miguel Marín Bosch of Mexico on 7 February presented a paper, co-authored by six countries, on verification of the amendment proposal to convert the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) of 1963 into a comprehensive test ban treaty. Draft Protocol II had been submitted to the parties to the Treaty during the Amendment Conference held in New York from 7 to 18 January *(see page 30)*.

Ola Dahlman of Sweden, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts on Seismic Events, reported that 26 nations had participated in the Group's thirty-first session (11-21 February). It was the last of a series of meetings in preparation for the full-scale testing within the Group's Second Large Technical Test, planned for 22 April to 9 June 1991.

It was to be possibly the largest single multilateral experiment ever undertaken to test a component of a verification system for arms limitation and disarmament, he stated.

So far, 28 countries had indicated they might establish national data centres and participate in the Test's main phase. Full-scale testing requires hundreds of scientists, engineers and technicians at seismological and communications centres worldwide, Mr. Dahlman said.

Arms and the environment

Uruguay's Foreign Minister Hector Gros-Espiell said on 21 February that disarmament negotiations should not occur in a "closed domain" without outside contacts or public input. He said there was a clear relationship between arms control and environmental protection, particularly the inability to prohibit nuclear-weapons tests that would cause environmental deterioration.

In a statement to the Conference read by Mr. Komatina on 7 March, participants in the Women's Conference on the relationship between arms and the environment—which took place concurrently at the Palais des Nations in Geneva—said the Gulf war had demonstrated the enormous damage that weapons and war could inflict on the environment. With the world facing a serious ecological crisis, they stated, inadequate attention had been paid to the real and potential environmental costs of all types of weaponry.

Conference at Headquarters:

'More work' needed to amend partial test-ban Treaty

UN Photo 177195/M Grant

At the opening of the Amendment Conference: *(from left)* the UN Secretary-General, Conference President Alatas and Sohrab Kheradi, Secretary-General of the Conference.

The two-week Amendment Conference of the States Parties to the 1963 Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water—known as the partial test-ban Treaty—decided on 18 January that further work was needed before a proposed amendment converting it into a comprehensive test-ban Treaty could be adopted.

The Treaty prohibits any nuclear explosions—for weapon testing or any other purpose—in the atmosphere or beyond its limits, including outer space; or under water, including territorial waters or high seas; or in any other environment if such explosions cause radioactive debris. It does not cover underground tests.

It was reported *(PTBT/CONF/5)* that all five nuclear-weapon States conduct nuclear tests as part of their weapons programmes. Between 1963 and 1989, there were 1,271 internationally recorded tests.

By a vote of 74 in favour to 2 against (United Kingdom, United States), with 19 abstentions, the Conference called for its President, Indonesia's Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, to conduct further consultations on the Treaty and resume the work of the conference at "an appropriate time".

The "complex and complicated nature of certain aspects of a comprehensive test-ban treaty, especially those with regard to verification of compliance and possible sanctions against non-compliance", was acknowledged in the Conference's decision.

In his closing statement, Mr. Alatas said the Amendment Conference had contributed to advancing a comprehensive test ban by bringing together for the first time the parties to the Treaty to address obstacles to an agreement. There was, he said, a firm and continuing commitment to achieving a comprehensive test ban.

Amendment urged since 1985

The Treaty, signed on 5 August 1963 by the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States—the Depositary Governments—entered into force on 10 October that same year. As of 1 November 1990, there were 117 parties to it. Two nuclear-weapon States—China and France—are among those that have not acceded to it.

Amendment of the Treaty was formally proposed on 5 August 1988—the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Treaty's signing in Moscow—by Indonesia, Mexico, Peru, Sri Lanka, Venezuela and Yugoslavia, which since 1985 had urged the action through the sponsorship of General Assembly resolutions.

The amendment would add an additional article, providing for two protocols to be annexed to the Treaty. The first protocol would commit the parties to prohibit, prevent and not carry out any nuclear-test explosions, or any other nuclear explosions at any place under its jurisdiction. The second would provide detailed measures on verification.

Article II of the Treaty stipulates that the Depositary Governments must convene a conference to discuss an amendment, if at least one third of the States parties request it. Any amendment must be approved by a majority of all parties, including the Depositary States.

The States parties in March 1990 decided to hold the Conference in January 1991 after the United Kingdom, on behalf of the Depositary Governments, announced that the conditions of Article II had been met.

Varied views

In a message read on 7 January by a Soviet Union representative, President Mikhail Gorbachev confirmed his country's willingness to stop nuclear tests at any time if the United States did so, and expressed Soviet readiness to amend the Treaty to convert its limitations into a comprehensive test ban.

The United States on 10 January said that while a comprehensive test ban was its long-term goal, it still relied on a credible nuclear deterrent of which nuclear testing was a critical element.

The United Kingdom expressed the same view on 11 January, adding that a test ban would not necessarily prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, since it was possible to develop crude weapons without testing.

During a four-day general debate, many speakers said a comprehensive ban would help ensure non-proliferation of nuclear weapons as a first step towards total elimination. Citing the end of the cold war and improved international relations, some said the time was ripe for such a ban.

Others wanted the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate a total test ban, a measure that, they said, could not be viewed in isolation from the overall question of disarmament and arms control. Some believed that the extensive resources used to maintain nuclear-testing programmes could be used instead to address problems such as hunger, development and malnutrition.

Some States parties close to testing sites expressed concern over the adverse health effects resulting from underground tests. Members of the Permanent South Pacific Commission—Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru—called for a total ban on nuclear testing in the Pacific basin and the prevention of pollution of the marine environment and its resources.

IAEA news

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported on 30 January that 10 new nuclear plants were operating in 1990, bringing the world's total number of operating nuclear electricity plants to 424. These new facilities are in Canada, France, India, Japan, the Soviet Union and the United States.

Twenty-five countries generate electricity from nuclear power plants, the IAEA stated, with almost half of them producing more than one third of their electricity by nuclear power. Also in 1990, 12 reactors were shut down in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom.

The IAEA also announced that scientists and engineers from the European Community, Japan, the Soviet Union and the United States had completed a three-year collaboration to describe their vision of the next major step in the worldwide quest for useful power from controlled thermonuclear fusion. The conceptual design of the fusion test reactor, called International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor, is based on a concept used in dozens of scientific experiments during the past 20 years.

Thermonuclear fusion is an option, the IAEA stated, that is potentially acceptable from the environmental, safety and economic points of view for providing an adequate, worldwide energy supply for the future.

To combat terrorism

International controls to regulate plastic explosives adopted in Montreal

Reuters/Bettmann/R. Taggart

Remains of Pan Am Flight 103: Downed by plastic explosives.

An international convention that will tighten controls over plastic explosives often used in executing acts of terrorism has been adopted by the International Conference on Air Law.

Representatives from 79 States and six observer-delegations attended the Conference, which was held from 12 February to 1 March at the Montreal headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

The Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection requires countries to prohibit and prevent the manufacture in their territory of unmarked explosives, as well as movement of such explosives into or out of their territory. All plastic explosives will have to be marked by manufacturers with any one of four "detection agents" agreed upon by the Conference.

Within three years, plastic explosive stocks not specifically held for military or police activities are to be destroyed, used or rendered ineffective. Those for military or police functions are to be similarly disposed of within 15 years.

An International Explosives Technical Commission, set up by the Convention, will assess developments in plastic explosive manufacturing, marking and detection, keep the international community informed and propose amendments to the technical annex to the Convention.

Forty-one delegations signed the Convention on 1 March, the day it was adopted. It will enter into force when 35 States ratify it, provided that no fewer than five of these are producer States.

A human tragedy was the catalyst for the Convention—the destruction of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, on 21 December 1988. A plastic explosive device was reportedly secreted inside a cassette player.

"The response of the international community to that act of terrorism was swift and unanimous", UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar recalled as he opened the Conference. The United Kingdom and Czechoslovakia jointly proposed a convention that would make it harder for terrorists to obtain lethal explosives. The Security Council and the General Assembly unanimously supported that initiative.

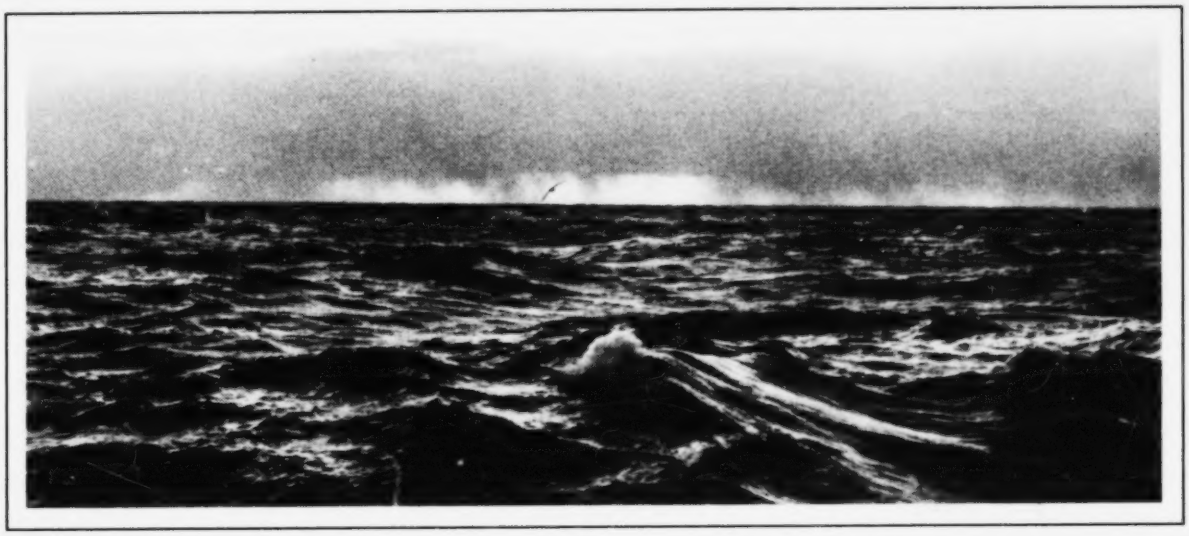
"Nothing perhaps activates cooperation like a universally shared sense of danger. The threat of terrorism that spares few countries or individuals is indeed practically a universal one", Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said.

Assad Kotaite, President of the ICAO Council, emphasized the alarming trend in recent years towards the destruction of aircraft in flight. ICAO would accomplish its security mission not only through the development of international law but "by marshalling the necessary resources to assist all States in introducing technical preventive measures to safeguard the security of international civil aviation", he said.

Other international instruments to protect international civil aviation against "criminal acts of unlawful interference" are: the Tokyo Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft (1963); the Hague Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft (1970); the Montreal Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation (1971); and the Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports Serving International Civil Aviation (1988).

ICAO is one of the 16 UN specialized agencies. Since its establishment in 1947, it has formulated many international standards on civilian aircraft design and performance, and on performance of airline pilots, flight crews, air traffic controllers and ground and maintenance crews.

Preparatory Commission welcomes China as fifth pioneer investor



UN Photo 78973

The Preparatory Commission for the International Seabed Authority and for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, at its ninth regular session (25 February-22 March, Kingston), welcomed China as the fifth nation to be approved as a pioneer investor in seabed mining under the terms of Resolution II of the Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea (1973-1982).

France, India, Japan and the USSR have already been registered as pioneer investors. They are assured of receiving mining contracts from the Authority after the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea enters into force.

On 13 March, the Commission received an application from Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the USSR, seeking to register the Interoceanmetal Joint Organization as the sixth pioneer investor. The application, along with supporting documents, will be reviewed by a group of technical experts that is to report back to the Commission at its next session (12-30 August 1991, New York).

Pioneer investors are granted exclusive rights to explore designated areas of the international seabed. Their obligations include payment of a $1 million annual fee to the Authority, provision of training for personnel designated by the Commission, transfer of technology to the Enterprise—the seabed mining arm of the Authority—and exploration of a mine site for an Enterprise operation.

China's application for exploration rights in a 150,000 square kilometre portion of the north-east Pacific Ocean was approved by the Commission on 6 March. In making the decision, the General Committee had considered the report of a group of technical experts, which had found China's application, on behalf of China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association (COMRA), to be in conformity with the rules established for registering pioneer investors prior to the Convention's entry into force.

The Chairman of the Preparatory Commission has begun informal consultations on the implementation of the obligations of the registered pioneer investor, COMRA.

The Commission also decided to appoint 16 experts from various countries to a Training Panel that would administer training provided by the pioneer investors before the Convention would enter into effect.

Following consultations with regional groups, the Commission Chairman had proposed that the Panel consist of one expert from each of the registered pioneer investors, in addition to experts selected on the basis of equitable geographic distribution. The Panel would include five members from Africa, four from Asia, three from Latin America and the Caribbean, three from Western Europe and one from Eastern Europe.

Chairman José Luis Jesus of Cape Verde said the Preparatory Commission should try to conclude its work by the target date of summer 1991. There was no intention to terminate the Commission, leaving its work in a vacuum.

'Using our minds and our hearts'

Fostering international understanding —In space

By Elsa B. Endrst

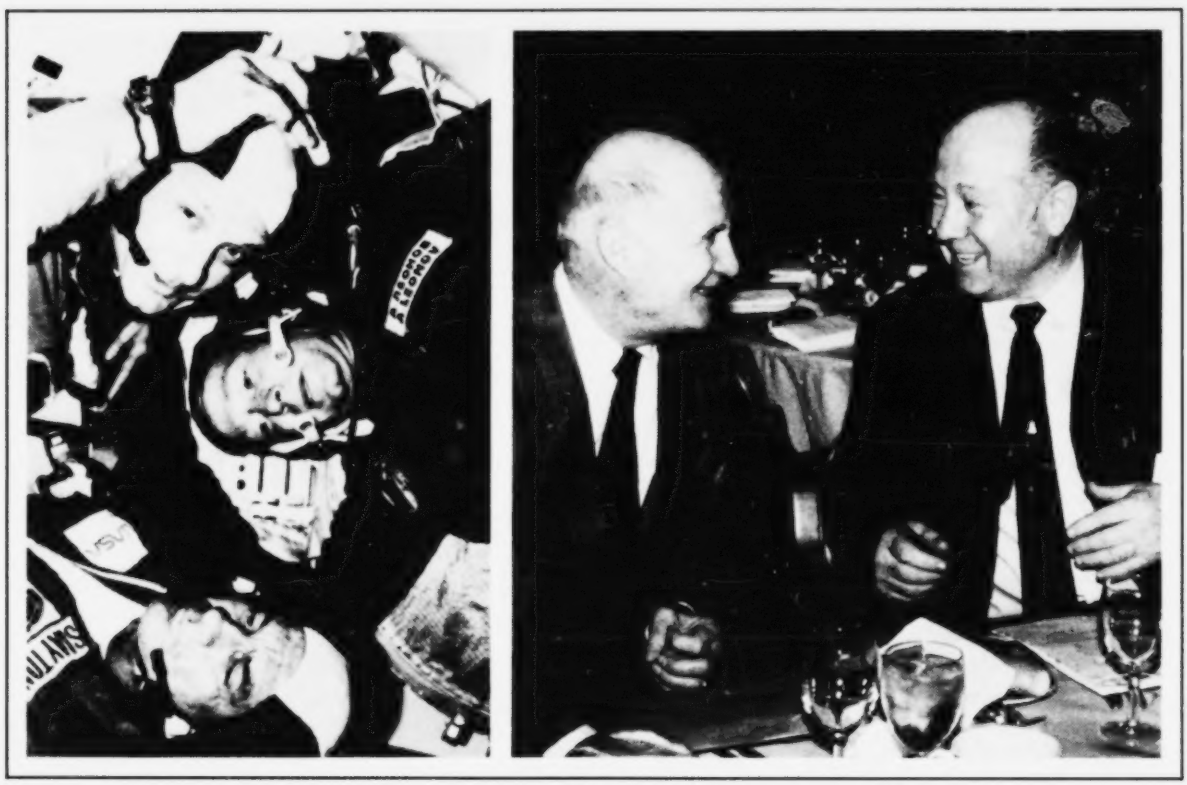


Photo by S. Friedman

Close encounter on Earth: United States Lt.-Gen. Stafford and Soviet Maj.-Gen. Leonov. *At left*, in 1975 in the space capsule; *at right*, 16 years later at the UN.

"This occasion symbolizes what Major-General Alexei and our crew members strove for 16 years ago. We strove for global co-operation, partnership and international understanding", said Lieutentant-General Thomas P. Stafford (USAF, Ret.).

He recalled his partnership with Major-General Alexei A. Leonov, a Soviet cosmonaut on the 1975 Apollo Soyuz Space Test Project, the first joint US-Soviet space project, which Lt.-Gen. Stafford commanded.

The occasion was a luncheon on 7 February at UN Headquarters in New York sponsored by American Greetings, a greeting card company, in cooperation with the UN Department of Public Information, to promote an international pen-pal network.

There was a visible camaraderie between the American astronaut and the Soviet cosmonaut, who were guest speakers and have maintained a personal friendship over the years.

Lt.-Gen. Stafford told the audience that the pen-pal project was a way of developing better intercultural understanding, just as "Alexei and I learned to communicate so well on our Apollo mission".

While the 1975 crew members did not all speak the same language, Maj.-Gen. Leonov noted: "To communicate with each other during our journey into space, we not only used our minds, but we also used our hearts."

Lt.-Gen. Stafford is currently heading an independent group to investigate available options and possible new technology for space projects.

He holds a record of "firsts" in the annals of space history. In addition to the Apollo-Soyuz flight, he and astronaut Walter M. Schirra in 1965 completed the first rendezvous of manned spacecraft, guiding Gemini 6 to within one foot of the orbiting Gemini 7.

Lt.-Gen. Stafford was also the first man to orbit the moon, paving the way for the historic Apollo II lunar landing in July 1969.

Answering questions on expenditures allocated to space programmes, Lt.-Gen. Stafford stated that "every cent" spent on space technology provides jobs for people in countries around the world. "The programmes have been used primarily to enhance our technology and we all have reaped benefits from it. The medical field is the best example of this. Outer space gives you so much knowledge, it's awesome", he said with conviction.

Maj.-Gen. Leonov agreed with that assessment, stating that the USSR has had "very good results" from its space programme, gaining valuable technology from them. "Good and inexpensive materials are created because of the space programme. New medicines have been prepared in a sterile atmosphere and technologies are developed which advance our civilian life."

Maj.-Gen. Leonov is now Deputy Director of the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center near Moscow, responsible for the Soviet space training programme.

He was the first man to walk in space, during the flight of Voshkod 2 in 1965. He is also the author of 10 books on space, including a children's book entitled "Walk in Space". In describing his descent to earth from outer space, Maj.-Gen. Leonov evoked the enormity and uncertainties of space exploration.

"You cannot imagine the overwhelming feeling which wells up in you when you descend from outer space. You are returning home. You feel a mysterious excitement. A feeling unknown before the flight.

"The earth is pulling you and you begin to feel every inch of your body. Then you return to your normal self, but it is very emotional and you would like to embrace everyone who comes near you. To embrace the whole earth. Every blade of grass you see gives you a joyous feeling", said the former cosmonaut.

As for future joint American-Soviet space efforts, Stafford reveals: "They are talking about eventually having American astronauts on board Soviet space stations and the Soviet Union joining us on our space shuttle." That would represent for them a continuing example of global cooperation, partnership and international understanding.

1990 achievements in space noted by UN Committee

Significant achievements in outer space in 1990 were noted by John Carver of Australia, Chairman of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, at the opening of its two-week session (19 February-1 March, New York).

Among them were:

▶ The launching by the United States of the Hubble Space Telescope in April 1990 and of the solar astronomy spacecraft Ulysses, built by the European Space Agency (ESA) in October.

▶ The launching by the Soviet Union in July of the Gamma astrophysical satellite, equipped with instruments developed in France, Denmark, Poland and the Soviet Union for the study of gamma-rays from extraterrestrial sources.

▶ The interplanetary spacecraft Magellan, launched by the United States in 1989 on a direct trajectory towards Venus, had reached that planet in August.

▶ The March encounter of the Japanese Hiten lunar probe with the moon was a first test of a swing-by technique that could be used in future lunar and planetary missions.

▶ The launching in July of Pakistan's first experimental low-earth-orbit satellite BADR-1 by a Chinese Long March-2E launch vehicle.

▶ The launching by the United States in July of the Combined Release and Radiation Effects Satellite into a highly elliptical orbit, reaching an altitude of 20,000 kilometres, for conducting experiments in the earth's magnetosphere.

Other noteworthy efforts mentioned by Mr. Carver were: the sixth long-term crew of two cosmonauts had returned safely to earth in August 1990 from the Soviet Union's orbital station MIR—launched in 1986—after six months of work in orbit; and in December, the first Japanese cosmonaut, Toyohiro Akiyama, had joined four Soviet cosmonauts for eight days in space.

China had launched in 1990 a number of communication, meteorological and remote-sensing satellites, including Asiasat, an international telecommunications satellite which was first launched as Westar 6 in 1984.

Human Rights Commission approves principles to protect rights of mentally ill

Asks for Third Decade against racism

UN Photo 177499

Jacques Poos *(left)*, Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, addresses the Commission on 31 January.

The Commission on Human Rights, at its forty-seventh session (28 January-8 March, Geneva), covered a wide range of topics, including the rights of mentally-ill persons, environment-related issues, slavery and the sale of children.

In adopting 90 texts—82 resolutions and 8 decisions—the Commission continued its work towards the implementation of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other important global instruments dealing with civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. This year, some 80 per cent of its decisions were taken by consensus.

The Commission asked the General Assembly to take steps to launch a Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, to begin in 1993.

It endorsed the draft body of principles for the protection of persons with mental illness and for the improvement of mental health care, to be transmitted through the Economic and Social Council for the Assembly's adoption later in 1991.

Recognizing that all individuals are entitled to live in an environment adequate for their health and well-being, the Commission entrusted Fatma Zohra Ksentini, Special Rapporteur, to prepare a study on human rights and the environment.

In welcoming the adoption in January 1991 of the Bamako Convention banning the import of all forms of hazardous wastes into Africa and controlling their transboundary movement generated in Africa, the Commission reaffirmed that the movement and dumping of toxic and dangerous products endangered basic human rights, such as the right to life and the right to the highest attainable standard of health.

The Commission also recommended that the Assembly establish a voluntary fund on contemporary forms of slavery. Member States were asked to consider taking action for the protection of children and migrant women against exploitation by prostitution and other slavery-like practices.

The Commission urged States to sign and ratify or accede to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, adopted by the Assembly on 18 December 1990.

Hungary offered to host the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Budapest. An initial Preparatory Committee meeting was set for 9 to 13 September 1991 in Geneva. On 19 February, the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights was appointed as Secretary-General of that Conference.

The 43-member Commission reviewed specific human rights situations in 13 countries and

territories, and dealt with alleged violations in southern Africa, the Middle East and other regions.

Work also proceeded on documents to protect the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities; indigenous persons; and the rights and responsibility of individuals, groups and organs of society to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Special Rapporteur on Kuwait

A Special Rapporteur is to be appointed to examine human rights violations by Iraqi forces in occupied Kuwait. The Commission also asked for another Special Rapporteur to thoroughly study human rights violations committed by the Iraqi Government.

The Commission decided to create a five-member expert working group for a three-year period to investigate cases of arbitrary detentions. For the first time, the UN would have specific mechanisms for investigating such violations.

Citing the disturbingly high numbers of internally displaced persons suffering throughout the world—persons forced to flee their homes and seek shelter and safety in other parts of their own country—the Commission asked Governments and international organizations to intensify their cooperation and assistance in worldwide efforts to address the serious problems and needs resulting from such displacement. An analytical report on the subject should be prepared, taking into account the protection of human rights of those persons.

Also considered were texts concerning unacknowledged detention of persons; the right to a fair trial; and the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, jurors and assessors and the independence of lawyers.

The Commission decided to establish an open-ended intersessional working group to consider the draft declaration on enforced or involuntary disappearances, with a view to its adoption by the Commission in 1992.

'In the shadow of the Gulf'

Commission Chairman Enrique Bernales Ballesteros of Peru said that the Commission was meeting in the shadow of the war in the Gulf. Philosophically, he stated that the preservation of human life was paramount and, from the human rights standpoint, war could never be justified.

Jan Martenson, Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, said the movement towards establishing fully democratic systems was encountering serious difficulties in several places where force was replacing reason and dialogue.

The conflicts in the world today reinforced the understanding that human rights violations provided fertile soil for the seeds of war and that the effective defence of human rights was an essential element for the preservation of peace, he said.

Children: their rights

Four resolutions relating to the rights of children were adopted. The Commission welcomed the entry into force on 2 September 1990 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was a major step to promote universal respect for and observance of human rights.

Also welcomed was a preliminary report *(E/CN.4/1991/51)* by Vitit Muntarbhorn, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. A further report is expected in 1992.

The sale of children, he reported, was a universal phenomenon aggravated by consumerism, rapid communications and modern technology. Child exploitation was not merely a business for certain individuals, but an international system based on criminal elements profiteering from it. Also, child labour was a ubiquitous phenomenon which legislation *per se* would not eradicate.

Further work on a draft programme of action to prevent the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography *(E/CN.4/1991/50 and Add.1)* is to be undertaken by the Sub-Commision on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, with a view to its adoption in 1992.

Another draft programme of action for the elimination of the exploitation of child labour, also proposed by the Sub-Commission, was to be reviewed further.

Special declaration

In a special declaration read by Chairman Ballesteros, the Commission noted the positive developments taking place in the Soviet Union with regard to respect for human rights.

He expressed the Commission's grave concern over the recent tragic acts of violence which had resulted in human rights violations, including the right to life. He also acknowledged with satisfaction the Soviet decision to investigate those events and bring those responsible to justice and the willingness to communicate investigation results to the Commission.

The Commission also asked its Chairman to entrust an independent expert to prepare a study on "the means whereby and the degree to which respect for the right to own property alone as well as in association with others" contributed to the development of individual liberty and intiative, "which serve to foster, strengthen and enhance the exercise of other human rights".

It appealed to States to ensure respect and support for the rights of persons who exercised the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, association and peaceful assembly, and the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, or who sought to promote and defend those rights and freedoms and, where any persons had been detained solely for exercising those rights, to release them immediately.

The Commission appealed urgently for effective action to combat and eliminate summary or arbitrary executions, including extra-legal executions.

The Commission also decided to consider as a matter of high priority in 1992 the question of the "consequences on the enjoyment of human rights of acts of violence committed by armed groups that spread terror among the population and by drug traffickers".

Country reports

The Commission adopted resolutions with regard to specific human rights situations in Afghanistan, Albania, Cambodia, Cuba, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Haiti, Iraq and Kuwait, Iran, Romania and Western Sahara. The following are details of some of those texts.

Albania: The Government of Albania was asked to free all political prisoners and adopt measures to establish freedom, democracy and the rule of law, and to effectively promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Albanians. The free expression of the will of voters should be guaranteed during the next proclaimed elections. All Albanians should be enabled to exercise their right to vote and to stand for election.

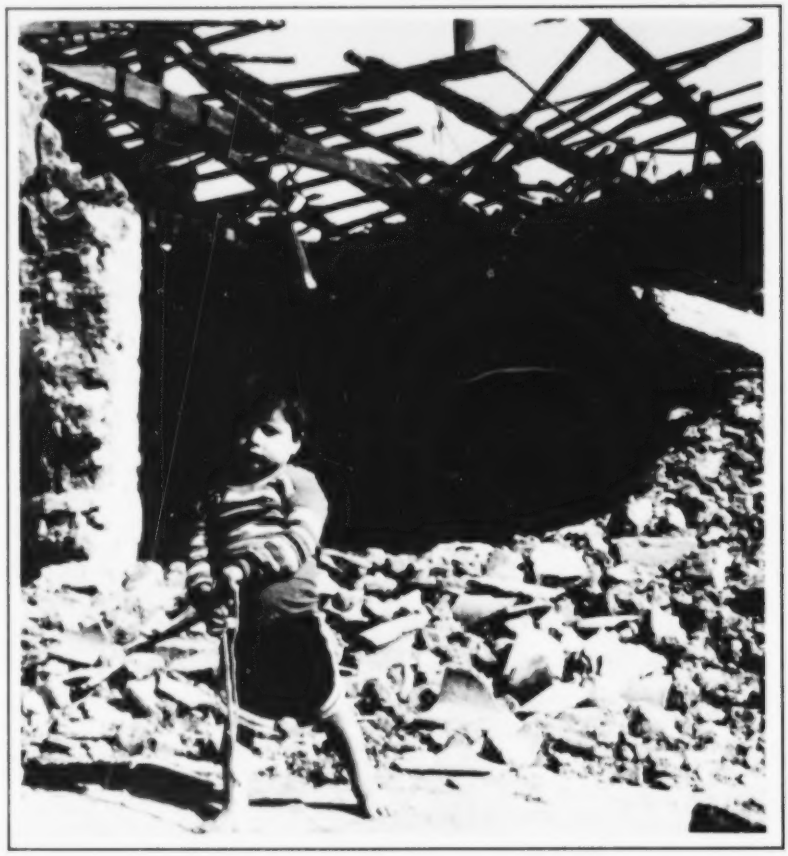
Albania replied that all its people enjoyed fundamental freedoms and that, dedicated to democracy, it was rebuilding all democratic institutions and guaranteeing the free participation of all political parties in a vote. There was freedom of assembly and expression, as well as the right to belong to trade union organizations.

Cuba: The Commission recognized the cooperation extended to the Secretary-General by the Cuban Government and asked Cuba for continued cooperation, taking into account the international agreements to which Cuba was a party and the institutional procedures established in the field of human rights.

The Secretary-General was asked to appoint a Special Representative to maintain direct contacts with the Cuban Government and its citizens on issues contained in a 400-page report *(E/CN/4/1989/46)* issued in 1989 on the situation of human rights there. (The mission was undertaken upon Cuba's invitation in 1988.)

Cuba stated that the so-called human rights violations in Cuba were pure fabrication. Human rights there had not deteriorated. Cuba remained willing to allow investigations into its human rights record.

El Salvador: The Commission expressed serious concern at the persistence of politically motivated violations of human rights and at the atmosphere of intimidation in which certain sectors of El Salvador's population lived. It urged



UN Photo 155693

A child left homeless by civil strife in El Salvador.

the Government and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) to continue their dialogue.

El Salvador replied that peace could be achieved through negotiation and dialogue. It had witnessed positive developments in its search for social harmony and was concerned about the FMLN claim that it should enjoy an equal sovereign status with the Government during peace negotiations. The FMLN should declare a cease-fire and refrain from impeding forthcoming elections.

Iraq: The Commission expressed grave concern at flagrant human rights violations by the Iraqi Government, which was urged to ensure full respect for human rights and, in particular, to halt arbitrary and summary executions, arbitrary detentions and disappearances and torture.

A Special Rapporteur should thoroughly study violations of human rights by the Iraqi Government, the Commission stated.

In a resolution on the human rights situation in Kuwait under Iraqi occupation, the Commission strongly condemned Iraqi authorities and occupying forces for grave violations of human rights against Kuwaitis and nationals of other States.

Iraq responded that it had a long-standing human rights tradition, but its power threatened the designs of certain parties on the oil in the area. Kuwait and the United States, Iraq said, had conspired to reduce the price of oil and threaten Iraq's security. Iraq had adopted measures to ensure the security of people and property in Kuwait.

Iran: Iran was called upon to comply with international human rights instruments and ensure that all individuals within its territory enjoyed such rights. The Commission noted Iran's invitation to the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit Iranian prisons.

UN Photo 177677/M. Grant

Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar *(right)* receives documents from Ambassador Juan Somavia of Chile concerning the human rights situation in his country.

Iran replied that the examination of the human rights situation in Iran had begun some years ago when it faced numerous difficulties. That was no longer the case. There was nothing now in Iran that could be considered a routine and systematic violation of human rights. Iran would continue to cooperate with the UN in the field of human rights.

Romania: The Commission noted that, despite regrettable lapses, respect for human rights was in general continuing to improve in Romania. Romanian authorities should continue to ensure that human rights in all aspects were respected in their country.

Romania stated that its new Government was facing all sorts of demands from its citizens to solve problems inherited from the old régime. Its new society would have political pluralism and a market economy, achieved through respect for the rights and choices of the individual.

Other action

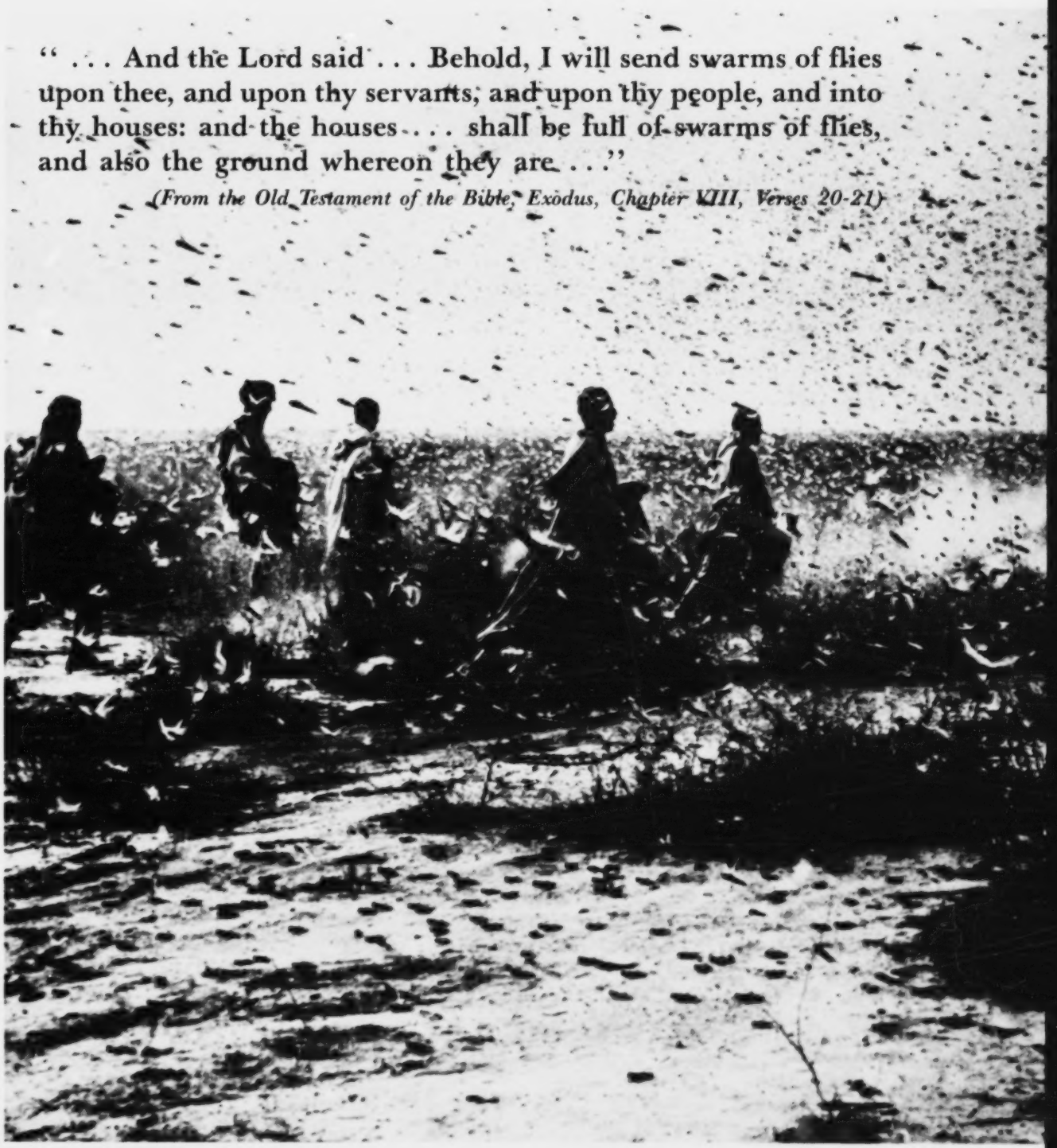
The Commission also asked for:

- A meeting in 1991 to promote tolerance and harmony and to combat racism and racial discrimination;
- An expert seminar, under the UN programme of human rights activities, to discuss "appropriate indicators to measure achievements in the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights";
- A regional training course in Latin America on the UN, human rights and indigenous people;
- A series of national workshops to promote a better understanding of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and its implications;
- Concrete proposals on the effective implementation and promotion of the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development; and
- A consolidated list of provisions in various UN standards relating to human rights in the administration of justice, with a view to drafting model texts for national legislation.

Preparing the w

" . . . And the Lord said . . . Behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses . . . . shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are . . ."

(From the Old Testament of the Bible, Exodus, Chapter VIII, Verses 20-21)



FAO Photo 5937J/Studios du Soussi Rabat

orld for disaster

By Anne-christine d'Adesky

Some 3,000 years have passed since the Biblical plagues, but the image of a sky filling with locusts still has the power to frighten us. That is because locusts remain a modern threat, a natural disaster that can occur without warning and wreak havoc. Today, locusts are only one of the many natural disasters that the international community has vowed to bring under control.

Rejecting the fatalism of the ancients, world leaders have declared the 1990s the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. Relying on science and technology, as well as human resources, they have embarked on an ambitious disaster prevention plan to minimize the damage caused by natural hazards that still claim over a million lives each decade. Now in its second year, the Decade reflects "an idea whose time has come", in the words of United States National Academy of Sciences President Frank Press, who first proposed the concept in July 1984.

The Decade was proclaimed by the forty-fourth UN General Assembly on 22 December 1989. UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar stated: "The Decade offers an opportunity for the United Nations to demonstrate its catalytic ability to bring together the diversity of skills, resources and groups needed to stem the losses from natural disasters . . . It has the moral authority to call for disaster reduction efforts by all nations, including the developing ones where the toll from such disasters is most tragic in terms of human losses and economic setbacks."

One does not have to go as far back as Biblical times to recall the death, damage and injury caused with thousands more earthquakes, cyclones, wildfires, avalanches and tornadoes. The volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius near Pompeii, Italy, in 79 A.D. took 20,000 lives; the lesser-known 1931 flooding of the Hwang-ho River in China, 3.7 million lives.

While many deaths were caused by either drowning or fire, disease outbreaks stemming from natural disasters also resulted in fatalities. When earthquakes strike populated areas, buildings collapse, people are killed, and water supplies and waste removal systems are devastated.

Air and food supplies may become contaminated, debris and decay build up and, within a short time, an outbreak of cholera or typhoid may occur. Depending on the severity of the disaster and the swiftness of relief operations, people may suffer from malnutrition and be displaced to become refugees.

It is a generally accepted fact that it is virtually impossible to prevent most natural disasters from occurring. What experience has taught, however, is that we can act to forestall or alleviate their impact on people, property and the environment.

Today, such factors as urbanization, growing population density and poor engineering have contributed to the negative impact of natural disasters on cities and communities. The damage caused by

disruption of the development process. Hence, just as "natural" and "man-made" disasters may be linked, so are the issues of development and disaster prevention.

Years of effort wiped out

"Disasters very often wipe out years of efforts and investments in development", said UN Disaster Relief Co-ordinator M'Hamed Essaafi. The Geneva-based Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) acts as the umbrella organization in charge of responding to "emergency" or "sudden" disasters *(see story on page 46)*.

"In disaster-prone countries, disaster mitigation must be considered as part of the development process and should therefore be included in the development plans of these countries", Mr. Essaafi said. An UNDRO study completed last year illustrates this point. During the 20-year period from 1970 to 1989, the average yearly losses in the 17 most disaster-prone countries were greater than 2.5 per cent of their gross national product (GNP), the study showed. In at least six of those countries, the losses were greater than 5 per cent of their GNP, which, Mr. Essaafi concluded, "can cripple an economy".

The term "global warming" first appeared in the lexicon of our everyday language in the late 1970s as Nature's way of telling us that industrial development might be threatening the ozone layer of the atmosphere. Meteorologists had already been tracking the ozone for more than three decades, aware that adverse climate changes were on the rise.

Starting in the early 1970s, systematic satellite monitoring showed that the total ozone layer over Antarctica had been drastically decreasing during September and October. A similar pattern of depletion was observed over the North Pole. By 1975, there was mounting public concern that supersonic aircraft might be threatening the ozone in the stratosphere; scientists argued that chemical pollutants, such as carbon dioxide and methane from cars, factories and waste, were heating up the atmosphere.

The Bettman Archive

A dark warning

The 1980 eruption of Mount Saint Helens in Washington State in the United States also sent a dark warning to humanity, literally, as ash from the blast covered an area half the size of the United States. Could such a phenomenon be related to the flash fires that burned in California's redwood forests in the late 1980s? No one could say for sure, but the debate was on: did something man-made or natural, or both, cause 1988 to be the warmest in 130 years? An

UPI/Bettmann

answer was not available immediately.

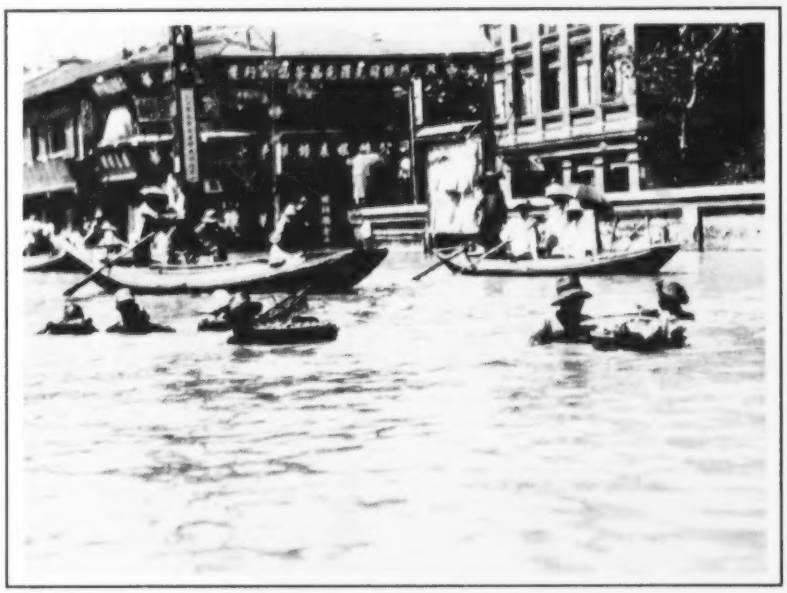
In 1989, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) confirmed that there was "clear evidence that human use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs, freons) had significantly affected the ozone layer over the whole globe". Unless something was done, there would be more climate changes, which would impact on hazards, WMO predicted.

"The trend is quite clear", Director Essaafi stated in June 1990. "From the 1960s to the 1980s ... there has been a fivefold increase in the frequency of great natural disasters, and a threefold increase in total economic losses."

Countering such ominous predictions are the advances made in disaster mitigation. These include not only scientific measurements of natural phenomenon, but measures that reduce the vulnerability of communities to hazards, including evacuation plans and early warning systems. Land-use policies, hazard mapping and construction of earthquake-resistant structures are examples of cost-effective preventive measures.

With new technologies being developed at a rapid pace, it made sense to scientists to mount a concerted global effort to prepare nations, especially in the developing world, against the expected increase in natural disasters and economic losses. As Mr. Essaafi remarked, "prevention is possible, and is an investment well worth its cost. If these long-term measures are complemented by shorter-term preparedness measures ... then losses resulting from disasters can be reduced to a minimum."

That is the premise underlying the Decade programme—disaster mitigation—known in lay terms as preparedness and prevention. The Decade's ultimate goal is the self-sufficiency of all nations to deal with natural disasters. The key objective is to ensure reduction in human loss of life and economic property by informing and educating the world community on how to prepare for disaster.



UPI/Bettmann

The 1931 flood in China.

This is the complementary half to disaster relief work. To many, the shift in focus from post-disaster relief to pre-disaster prevention is long overdue. "People forget that you measure a success in terms of what you can avoid in terms of loss of life, or natural resources", said Philippe Boullé, Chief of the UNDRO New York office. "This is an area that has come to be of increasing importance to everyone."

Sharing technology

While technology can be used to gather data and monitor hazards, it must also be used to disseminate that information. This, in turn, demands that nations share their technology and that professionals be trained in developing countries where gaps in technology exist. In 1988, United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Director-General Federico Mayor told a gathering of top scientists in the field that "the acid test of the Decade would be the ability to make research results available and palatable to those most likely to put them to good use".

Such thinking underlies the stated goals of the Decade, among which is to help individual nations develop programmes and guidelines for preventing natural disasters, taking into account their cultural and economic diversity. The exchange of information is seen as critical, as is the fostering of scientific and engineering endeavours aimed at closing the gaps in knowledge about, for example, locust infestation in Africa. Technology assistance and preparedness training of civil servants, health workers, police and firefighters are examples of the broad educational effort of the Decade. So are the more traditional public information and media campaigns aimed at emphasizing the age-old adage: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

A historic task

So far, the Decade has presented a herculean task, as well as a historic one, bringing together in a novel way the international scientific and academic community with political leaders and non-governmental organizations. A small secretariat in Geneva is in charge of coordinating and promoting Decade activities, while a 25-member Scientific and Technical Committee has been working with some 30 national committees to assess overall gaps in technology and do a critical per-country needs assessment. A trust fund has been set up to raise money for the Decade, with such well-known figures as Marilyn Quayle, wife of United States Vice-President Dan Quayle, working hard to promote disaster mitigation.

WFP/C. Laratta

Distributing food to disaster victims.

In addition to UNDRO, the key UN organizations actively implementing the plan are the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Children's Fund, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization and UNESCO. These, among others, have taken on the task of linking disaster prevention with ongoing development activities. Other issues concern applications and governmental policy.

As noted earlier, however, the final responsibility for the success of the Decade rests on national authorities. By the year 2000, Decade planners hope to have drafted a Universal Declaration of Principles regarding natural disaster reduction.

Under the Decade's proposed framework programme, disaster mitigation falls into three types of activity: assessment of risks (hazard evaluation); preparedness; and warning, including early warning systems. These categories illustrate the different activities performed before, during and after a natural disaster strikes. It is an approach experts call "integrated", which means that regional or national efforts at disaster intervention must be coordinated with international efforts to mobilize resources and provide emergency relief.

Italian ecologist Carlo Pelanda, a former member of an Ad Hoc Group of Experts working on the Decade, has suggested that disaster reduction policies must be tied not only to national development and modernization, but also to environmental and disarmament policies of nations as well.

"The setting up of small- and large-scale civil engineering projects for rural and urban (re)structuring and maintenance, (with the support of common technologies) is a good example of such a merger", said Mr. Pelanda. Regarding disarmament, he said, the Decade provided an opportunity to demilitarize satellites and other technologies used for military purposes by converting them into "international civil security" systems for disaster prevention.

To date, 95 per cent of disaster-related deaths have occurred in developing countries, where over two thirds of the world's population live in conditions of economic poverty and limited resources. For this reason, implementation of the Decade will have to be done on a grass roots level, as well as regionally and nationally. Over long years of experience, development workers have learned that the best plans will go awry if they do not correspond to the needs of affected communities. Disaster mitigation is no different.

Last July, UNDRO and UNDP officials launched a joint three-year Decade training programme aimed at community groups, as well as UN agency field staff. They hope to directly train 3,500 persons in disaster mitigation work by 1993. Indirect training will then be given to ministry and government officials, local leaders, and civil defence and emergency health workers, as well as to populations vulnerable to hazards.

The training initiative has been perfected by development workers. It is an example of how Decade

projects are being modelled after known successes. Another is the UN International Emergency Network (UNIENET), a computer database system, which serves as an electronic billboard for Decade activities, as well as the latest data available on disasters in the making *(see story on page 52)*.

As it stands, the Decade is seen as building on existing systems and approaches in a complementary manner. One such network is Interaction, a broad coalition of private voluntary organizations working in the areas of development, refugees, and disaster relief *(see story on page 54)*.

Several concrete steps have been taken to get the Decade moving. Phase one activities in 1990 included assessments of the needs of individual countries. The UN also declared 10 October as the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction. In addition to the training programme, recent activities have included the first meeting of the Scientific and Technical Committee in Bonn, Germany, from 4 to 8 March.

The Committee session followed a number of international preparatory meetings on the Decade last year in Japan, Rome and Morocco.

In March, the Committee adopted at its first session the Hazard Prevention, Reduction, Environmental Safeguarding, Monitoring Programme with Targets (HAZARD PRE-EMPT), a set of guidelines for identifying hazard-control targets. It also endorsed the proposed structure for the Decade's framework programme with some additions, adopted initial criteria for project approval and selected 12 (5 ongoing, 7 new) demonstration projects, among them, a pilot project for disaster mitigation in hospital facilities in Latin America and one on international centres for research and training in mitigation of risks.

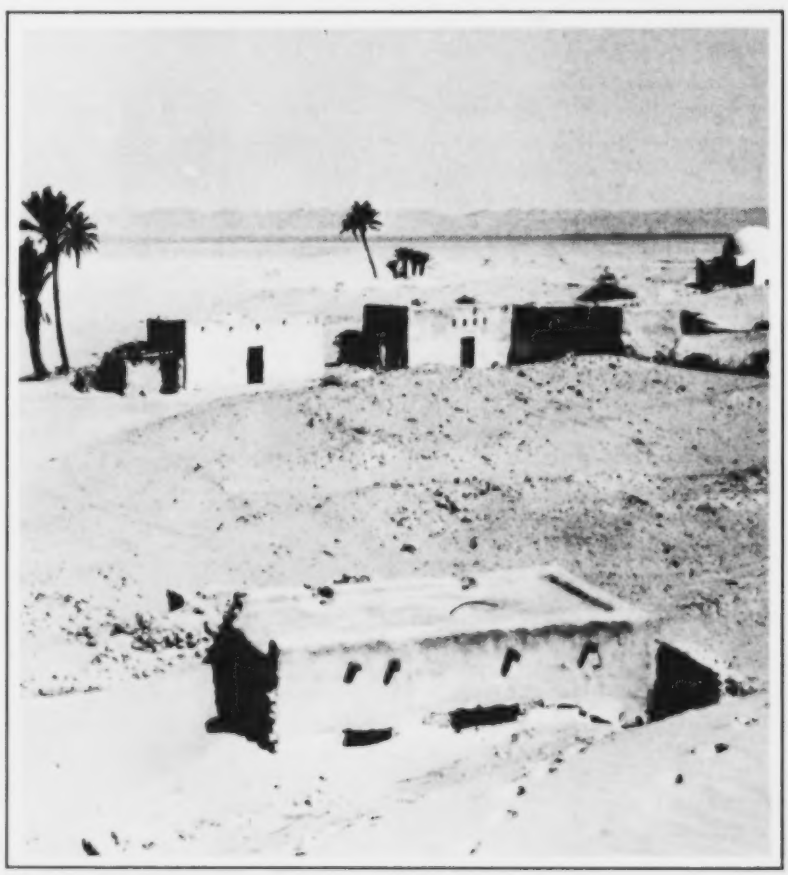
A second Committee meeting is being considered later in 1991. Also discussed in Bonn was the need for a regional meeting of the National Committees for the Decade and a possible 1993 global meeting conference on the Decade.

Examples of regional support for the Decade include the establishment last year of a seismic network in Colombia, the first of its kind in South America. On the international front, Morocco has offered facilities to stockpile relief supplies and material in the event of a sudden disaster. Other countries have put into place a variety of larger and smaller projects aimed at fulfilling the long-term goals of national preparedness.

There have been obstacles along the way as well. Some countries have expressed concern that the Decade is advancing more slowly than planned. In October 1990, representatives from Bangladesh, the United Republic of Tanzania, Japan, the USSR and Colombia were quick to praise the work done by UNDRO as the umbrella agency for disaster mitigation. But they also expressed concern that staffing shortages and lack of funds were straining UN disaster-related work.

In reality, the march of Nature has forced agencies like UNDRO to cope with a greater number of sudden disasters than previously projected.

Will future generations look up to the sky and see a shining sun? Will locusts become a threat remembered only by historians? Decade planners hope so. They leave us with the message: Be prepared!



UNEP 0254/T Farkas

A Tunisian village abandoned to the desert.

UNDRO: Coping with disaster . . .

A fine line

From the moment political tensions began to escalate in the Persian Gulf area in August 1990, the phones began to ring constantly at the Office of the UN Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO), which specializes in disaster-related matters. Although UNDRO was formed in 1971 chiefly to respond to sudden natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions and typhoons, its mandate has been expanded to cover emergency "man-made" disasters.

"Our work symbolizes what many people have come to believe, which is that there is sometimes a fine line between a disaster caused by natural forces or human ones", said Philippe Boullé, Chief of the UNDRO New York office. What distinguishes UNDRO from any other UN or outside development agency "is that our focus is on the sudden disaster, rather than the slow-moving disaster, when there is a crisis and a need for an immediate response within 24 hours to avoid the loss of human lives".

In the case of the Gulf crisis, after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, hundreds of thousands of foreign workers from Egypt, India and elsewhere began scrambling for safe haven in Jordan, whose borders were left open on humanitarian grounds. Within days, however, Jordan found itself unable to cope with the huge influx of refugees from Iraq and Kuwait, and called on the international community for help.

UNDRO, a specialized office of the Secretary-General, immediately swung into action, coordinating air transport and repatriation of more than 700,000 persons—some 7,000 a day—back to their countries of origin. UNDRO officials in Jordan oversaw the relief efforts of a diverse coalition of groups, including other UN organizations, the International Organization for Migration and the International Committee of the Red Cross and private non-governmental organizations. Within days of Jordan's cry for help, 40 flights a day were leaving Amman with relieved refugees.

Reuters/Bettmann

In January, UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar designated UNDRO as the coordinator for the large-scale international response to evacuate more people from the zones of conflict. UNDRO contacted regional government officials and international agencies to put in place an emergency plan of action that allowed for the pre-positioning of relief supplies at safe border points in Iran,

Jordan, Syria and Turkey. The Office also tapped into its extensive network to pull in cash for the beleaguered populations in the region, as well as additional medicines and food for the arriving waves of evacuees.

While hoping that war could be avoided, "we must at the same time be ready to face the worst", said UNDRO Coordinator M'hamed Essaafi.

By the time war had broken out, UNDRO had amassed $38 million from donor countries—$22 million from Japan alone—to pay for the airlifts, emergency housing, tents, food and other supplies for refugees engulfing the borders of Iraq. Earlier, it had also managed to provide $12 million in cash—a sum Mr. Boullé called "unprecedented"—directly to the Jordanian Government to compensate for its refugee resettlement expenses.

"This simply had never happened before, that this money went directly to the Jordanians", Mr. Boullé stated, adding: "It's important because it is a good measure of our success, that the donor countries have confidence in our approach." Since that time, the money has steadily flowed in; as of March, donors had contributed $63 million to the relief effort.

A local focus

UNDRO's approach is one that relief officials call unusual by international agency standards because it is based on the belief that local efforts work best in an emergency. Instead of automatically flying in outside specialists to an affected area, UNDRO begins by working with government officials to assess the local ability to respond.

If no "in-country" specialists are available, for example, then outsiders are invited to bring in their expertise. But UNDRO stresses that relying on local resources, including manpower and contacts, works best in an emergency.

"When you're dealing with earthquakes and such disasters, it's the local people who are the first ones who will be able to give assistance", explained Mr. Boullé. "What we do is work with the local people, offer them training in disaster mitigation and other assistance so that they will be ready to handle such emergencies."

UNDRO also works with national civic protection and private voluntary organizations to assure that legislation and other measures have been taken to allow them to act in a matter of hours. When an earthquake strikes, for example, whole villages are swallowed up and the infrastructures of cities are often damaged.

For that reason, UNDRO uses its network to link private industries, such as banking and construction, and public facilities, such as hospitals, schools, power stations and telecommunications buildings, to assure that emergency housing and water supplies and other resources can be mobilized.

"I work relatively closely with UNDRO, and I find the information and knowledge they give us very useful", said Lisa Mullins, Programme Officer for Foreign Disaster Assistance of InterAction, a coalition of 125 private voluntary organizations. UNDRO situation reports, for example, give "some of the best information we get on sudden disasters", she says. "They provide quick, reliable information on the extent of damage." InterAction includes more than 60 agencies specializing in disaster and humanitarian relief, including CARE, OXFAM and Save The Children.

"Theirs is basically the first written notification we have that something is happening", Ms. Mullins added. Later it may be confirmed by the Red Cross or by Governments. "But it's helpful to us because it helps us assess at what point we may have to respond."

Preparedness vs. relief

To a lay person, the bulk of UNDRO activities resembles less a UN organism with its language of diplomacy, than a scientific think-tank. UNDRO technical reports are just that: highly scientific analyses

UNDRO Photo

Mr. Essaafi on a visit to Bangladesh. Tens of thousands died after a devastating cyclone there in 1991.

UNICEF/4462/91/A Martinez

Epidemics often result from catastrophic disasters. *Above*, a cholera-prevention campaign under way in a poor neighbourhood in Lima, Peru.

of such specific problems as the impact of tidal waves on the Maldives Islands, or the continued desertification of Egypt. Nor is the term "technical relief" limited to science. Medical expertise may be needed, for example, when assessing how to respond to an epidemic of cholera or other diseases in a refugee camp. Whether the disaster is caused by nature or human engineering, if it is an emergency, the chances are that UNDRO will be involved.

Early in 1991, there was a cholera outbreak in Peru. The Pan-American Health Organization shouldered the main responsibility for this emergency. At its request, UNDRO monitored the situation, relying on field assessments of the growing epidemic by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on-site representatives. Working closely together, UNDRO and UNDP readied emergency medical supplies and notified humanitarian agencies. As Michael Priestley, a senior UNDP disaster prevention expert, explained, UNDRO's role in such emergencies is pivotal.

"Disaster relief is a very difficult problem of logistical engineering", said Mr. Priestley. "UNDRO can fly in people into any situation ... it's that type of instant response that's needed."

Both Messrs. Boullé and Priestley praised the special working relationship that exists between UNDRO and UNDP. "We do a lot with UNDRO because we provide technical assistance", Mr. Priestley explained. "We have been around for 40 years and we have contacts in 114 countries." When UNDRO was being organized, he added, "it was decided to have UNDP double up as the field representatives for UNDRO—our field representatives are theirs". Through this linkage, UNDRO, a relative newcomer by agency standards, gained an instant infrastructure that agencies with longer track records in the field take years to develop.

"While it's true that we are not the unit that brings the food and the water, we are the ones who make that happen", said Mr. Boullé. "We go in first to help the Government assess the damage, or what is needed. We then pull out when the other agencies have had a chance to get themselves organized."

Typically, UNDRO will field the first phone calls regarding a developing disaster. The Office will then contact scientists, assess the potential damage and organize transportation to evacuate people if needed. It will also advise local voluntary organizations and other groups on how to respond, bring in technical experts, organize donations of food and other relief supplies, working closely with the affected countries to figure out which agency should do what in the specific emergency. The key for UNDRO is speed and efficiency.

As Mr. Boullé explained, 90 per cent of those who survive sudden natural disasters are found alive in the first 24 hours. He states: "While immediate local response is always essential, outside help is often crucial. We have pledged in our office to respond to any request for assistance within 24 hours. And I think we have been recently quite successful in doing that very well."

The 'non-natural odds'

Despite its many successes, Mr. Boullé will be the first to admit that UNDRO is limited in its response for various reasons. First is its mandate, which stipulates that UNDRO can only act upon a governmental request for assistance. Hence, like other agencies with similar charters, UNDRO cannot help a country that does not want to be helped. The Office must respect UN security regulations, which sometimes means pulling out of areas deemed too dangerous by the UN.

A case in point is Liberia where civil war broke out in 1990, displacing thousands of civilians, resulting in widespread starvation and, tragically, civilian massacres by warring factions. UNDRO officials, upon

the Liberian Government's request, had been working in the country for six months prior to the outbreak of the conflict. Although many starving refugees needed food, supplies and medicine, UNDRO had no choice but to leave when the orders came.

"There was nothing we or any other agency could do in that case, and that is of course very frustrating", admitted Mr. Boullé. As soon as the security situation allowed it, UNDRO and other UN agencies returned to Liberia in October 1990.

A delicate diplomacy

Another challenge for UNDRO is the delicate task of saying "no" to well-intentioned donors or agencies.

In the case of the December 1988 earthquake in Armenia, for example, there was an extraordinary world response for help. Unfortunately, much of that came in the form of poorly-packed goods and clothing. Even after officials had stated that no additional donations were needed, contributions kept pouring in.

In the end, such help became what UNDRO publicly termed "a disaster within a disaster". Clothing had to be fumigated; food spoiled and had to be discarded.

Still, UNDRO's claim to success in the financial area is based on hard numbers that show a twofold increase in in-cash and in-kind emergency assistance over the last biennium. Some $40 million in contributions were channelled directly through UNDRO for disaster relief during 1988 and 1989, versus $22 million for the preceding biennium. In 1991, with $63 million already raised for the Gulf crisis, those figures are likely to rise.

A central question facing all UN agencies is how that money is disbursed and, specifically, how much goes to salaries. Such queries do not make Mr. Boullé uncomfortable; quite the contrary.

Reuters/Bettman/F. Lengagne

An Armenian child and his father pause before the ruins of a house destroyed by the 1988 earthquake.

"Not one penny of donor contributions for specific disasters goes towards missions or salaries", he said. At present, only 3 per cent of disaster-specific donations go to support costs, as compared to the average 14 per cent charged by major international relief agencies.

UNDRO's budget for staff salaries, said Mr. Boullé, is divided at 50 per cent from the regular UN budget and 50 per cent from Member States' donations. UNDRO is now actively working to strengthen its Trust Fund to pay for its expanding activities.

A third "sensitive area" is UNDRO's status as chief organizer for a plethora of relief organizations. Here, the issue is one Mr. Boullé calls the "question of efficiency". A blunt talker, he said: "Not all relief agencies are as effective or well organized, and this can be difficult." Among his tasks are determining competence and good organization, because these are the elements that make the difference in a crisis.

"People are not always happy about that", Mr. Boullé acknowledged. What helps is that UNDRO is a direct office of the Secretary-General. "For that reason, UNDRO has some muscle to make things happen", he explained.

Given its special authority, UNDRO can also assume a role as a fulcrum for opinion on policy for the various NGOs it unites. "My sense is that they assess a situation and can make other UN agencies answerable to them", said Ms. Mullins, InterAction's coordinator. By comparison, she added: "None of these agencies are answerable to me."

Looking ahead, Mr. Boullé has good reason to feel optimistic as well as challenged. "Disaster relief is a growing field, and we are constantly learning and doing new things", he said. "With our resources and experience, we are in an excellent position to continue in our role." That also means, of course, that the phones at UNDRO are not likely to stop ringing any time soon.

HUGO: A case study

AP/Wide World Photos

On 16 September 1989, the most powerful hurricane of the twentieth century struck the Eastern Caribbean, blowing furiously over the region's seas and terrain at speeds of over 150 miles per hour. Surprisingly, only 14 people were killed, although property damage and other losses totalled some $365 million.

Today, disaster specialists cite Hurricane Hugo as a case study of a successful regional disaster response that emphasizes improved coordination of activities on sectoral and local, rather than national levels. This response is based on an interdisciplinary approach linking disaster reduction with sustainable development activities. That means working closely with grass roots organizations and small communities to determine who will do what in an emergency, and basing mitigation efforts on available local resources, rather than depending on outside help.

"What we have found is that if the local people are given information about disasters, they can do a tremendous amount to help themselves", said Franklin MacDonald, Project Manager for the model Pan-Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Project (PCDPPP). "It's amazing how extremely resourceful and creative people can be. After so many years, their coping mechanisms are well developed."

The Project, based in Antigua, was originally begun in 1981 as a short-term (18 months) programme managed by UNDRO, in collaboration with the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (LRCS) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), which is the regional office for the Americas of the World Health Organization. Its primary goals were to support the development of national and regional preparedness policies and legislation to strengthen the response of island States to the seasonal threat of hurricanes and other hazards.

During the pilot phase, it became evident that the cyclical pattern of regional destruction and disruption of activities caused by hurricanes required inter-island coordination that did not exist. For this reason, the project was extended to address the longer-term needs of the region.

One problem was the discrepancy in the capacity and resources of the 29 PCDPPP member States to respond to disaster. Some islands had national emergency evacuation plans; others had a single schoolhouse or hospital to serve as shelter during a natural calamity. If such single facilities were destroyed, loss of life would be greater. Hence, disaster preparedness meant shoring up facilities and creating institutional structures capable of coping with periodic volcanic eruptions and seasonal hurricanes.

"The linkage to development is critical", Mr. MacDonald said in a recent interview. "I think most economic pundits are in agreement that they haven't sufficiently taken that into account. Considering that every 10 years we can expect to have a hurricane, even the economic planners are now seeing

disaster preparedness as a part of environment assessment."

Project teams worked with local architects and city planners to assess housing vulnerability and possible shelter needs on each island as a first step in building institutions for national disaster management. Another step was working with local governments to prepare emergency evacuation and action scenarios. Educational and audio-visual materials were produced and distributed with local input from affected communities.

"We followed the CBO (community-based organization) and NGO (non-governmental organization) concepts of networking at the community level because you have to find out what people want and need if you expect them to participate", explained Mr. MacDonald. "We learn from them, too."

A good example, he said, was the "disproportionate" damage done to modern buildings in places like Montserrat over the last few years, compared to more traditional structures. "It's clear to us and to people there that in putting on new roofs, in some cases there was a failure to apply [sound] building techniques. There were short cuts taken." More importantly, he stated, "many of the traditional designs have stood up better. That's coming out as one of the fundamental lessons of the recent past."

Hurricane Hugo followed closely on the heels of Hurricane Gilbert (September 1988), which Mr. MacDonald said was a positive factor, as communities were already mobilized. "Had it been the first storm of the season, it might have been a different picture", he stated.

The installation of an effective warning system in Jamaica helped the island respond to Hurricane Gilbert. It also showed residents that "if you did this well you could certainly save lives", said the PCDPPP coordinator.

Among the various goals of the Project was sectoral building, consisting of providing technical support to government agencies in drafting guidelines for international and regional collaboration. UNDRO, along with LRCS and PAHO, worked with the Caribbean Community to set up a nascent Caribbean Disaster Response Agency (CDRA) to promote inter-governmental coordination.

"This involves pooling resources, moving people between islands and instituting standardized procedures", said Mr. MacDonald. "There is a methodological sequence to these activities and these people have got to get together to work out these operating procedures beforehand."

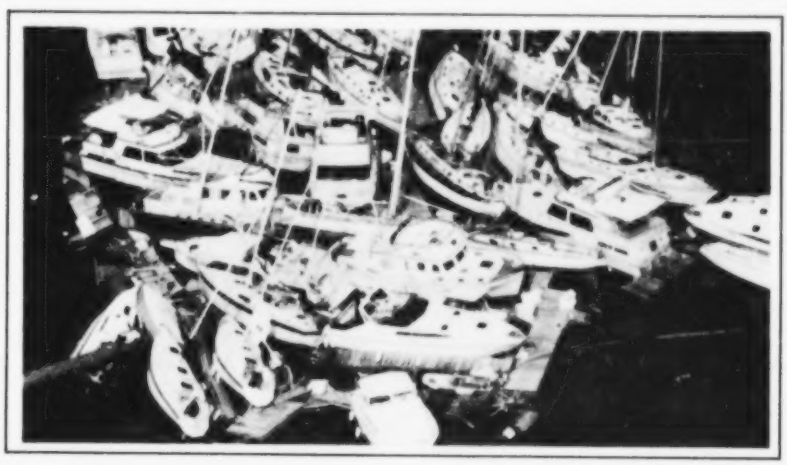
Another step has been to establish links with academic institutions to begin to collect local documentation on disasters, do research and, added Mr. MacDonald, "to influence the next generation of professionals and urban planners".

Another Project focus has been to implement standards for buildings and take measures to protect vital services. Today, most islands have backup telecommunications equipment safely stored for use after a disaster. The PCDPPP's emergency communications system was in place by the time Hurricane Hugo struck; it provided critical field reports to the international donor and relief workers.

To disaster specialists, what has distinguished the Project from other disaster initiatives has been the emphasis on training local people to act. Community-generated public information campaigns and intensive disaster training sessions have been carried out. The media has been educated about preparedness. As a result, a close working relationship exists between local officials and outside specialists from the UN and other bodies.

As part of the Decade's activities, national offices for the Decade have been established in half of the island states to date. Many have marked 10 October as Disaster Preparedness Day and carried out activities designed to highlight their awareness of the need to be prepared.

The Project was formally completed in March. In actuality, its goals and methods have been incorporated into the CDRA and other UNDRO/Decade programmes. "It's important that we make sure the various functions of the Project be continued", said Mr. MacDonald. Summing up the 10-year Pan-Caribbean Project, he said, "we can see the results in terms of human lives. In the case of Hurricane Hugo, it became very obvious."



Reuters/Bettmann/T. Salyer

The Isle of Palms, South Carolina, in the wake of Hurricane Hugo.

Perfecting the science of disaster

UN Photo 177406/M. Grant

A Romanian technical facility that monitors earthquakes. The equipment was financed by the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

There is hardly a more surreal scene than that of the eerie and silent devastation wreaked by major natural disasters. Add to that the odd sight of individuals arriving with small metal suitcases and what look like large umbrellas that they quickly unpack like someone's bizarre idea of the beginning of a picnic.

While this might give the impression of a futuristic Hollywood film set, it is actually a realistic picture of how today's disaster teams use the latest portable technologies to carry out immediate on-site analyses of damage and risk caused by natural disasters.

The suitcases and mock umbrellas are compact mobile satellite systems capable of transmitting audio, data, fax and telex communications signals. The information is fed into supercomputers and plugged into other communications networks. Within minutes, scientists and disaster specialists who are thousands of miles away are geared to respond to the crisis, aided by sophisticated computer models.

"The technology has advanced to the point where anyone on the scene with very little training can talk anywhere around the world", said John Scott, an American specialist in disaster telecommunications with the Center for Public Communications in Arlington, Virginia.

"The layman will become more important in this field because the new technologies are 'user-friendly'. Not only has the cost come down, but there are fewer moving parts and fewer buttons to push."

Mr. Scott is one of many professionals cooperating with UN and outside agencies in the work of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, which now links a wide range of information networks to allow for a truly interdisciplinary approach to disaster mitigation.

The information may vary from knowledge about geographical studies to land-use planning ideas, even to sociological studies into human behaviour in crisis. When all these elements are put together, they produce anything from weather maps to emergency evacuation procedures that field staff can instantly implement.

At present, there are four types of communications systems in use. A fixed satellite system consists of a space satellite with ground stations on earth. An example is Intelset, an international system in which each country has its independent ground facility. Another is the portable satellite system, which consists of mobile equipment packed into two suitcases. A third is a terrestrial mobile cellular system that operates in a manner similar to a car phone, in that it can transmit and receive electronic signals through a fixed ground tower, but is limited in its operating vicinity. Fourth is a terrestrial telecommunications wire system commonly used in cities for telephone and telegraph communications.

Among the UN information networks is CLICOM, a computer system of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), that is establishing climate-data management systems in all Member countries as a major Decade activity.

The World Weather Watch of WMO is another system that transmits information about weather and environmental conditions, as monitored by more than 10,000 stations. Recent use of polar orbiting and geostationary satellites has enhanced the quantity and accuracy of such data.

In response to the growing ozone depletion problem, WMO set up the Global Ozone Observing System, which uses the technology of satellite remote-sensing to monitor the atmospheric hole that develops each year over the Antarctic.

Complementing these systems is the information gathered by networks, such as the International Network of Earthquake Engineering Centres, set up by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1986 to carry out pilot projects and training courses for engineers in developing countries.

Other important UN bodies, such as the UN Development Programme, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, and the UN Environment Programme, have responded to the Decade's challenges by sharing the tasks of data collection, applications, impact studies, research and training regarding the range of disaster-related mitigation efforts.

The information these systems generate is often disseminated through the United Nations International Emergency Network (UNIENET), established by the Office of the UN Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) in late 1987 to provide immediate disaster-related information to agencies and organizations working in the field.

A computerized network, UNIENET functions as a kind of "bulletin board" for information exchange from such sources as the Pan-American Health Organization of WHO, Washington; the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre of the Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok; the Pan-Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Project, Antigua; the Secretariat of the Decade, as well as UNDRO, both in Geneva.

A range of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and disaster-related groups, such as the International Committee of Voluntary Agencies, InterAction, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies, also communicate via UNIENET.

As Decade activities have expanded, so has UNIENET's role in providing users with information about new scientific and technological advances in disaster mitigation work and their potential application in other areas. A shift in climate, for example, can affect a range of development activities, such as food production, water resource management, energy and transport, communications, as well as industrial processes.

Satellites and remote-sensing technology can provide not only advance warning of climate changes, but problem-solving models to sidetrack potential disasters.

In 1985, world scientists at the Villach International Conference predicted that, within 50 years, the global mean temperature of the earth's atmosphere could increase from 1.5 to 4.5 degrees Centigrade due to higher concentrations of carbon dioxide and "greenhouse" gases. This "global warming" would lead to a rise of 20 to 140 centimetres in the mean global sea-level.

Today, with supercomputers, this trend could be stopped. Scientists and professionals in the field are already putting in place a variety of mitigation strategies, based on computer desk top simulation exercises that mimic the activity of the "greenhouse" and other effects on the atmosphere.

A great part of the success of computer models will depend, somewhat ironically, on the very subjective nature of human behaviour.

"A big challenge for us is to get the users and producers of knowledge together, so that producers ask the right questions when they create their programmes", said Phil Burke, a land-use planner at the Texas A & M University's College of Architecture Hazard Reduction and Recovery Centre, one of several UNDRO-designed collaborating centres. "This also helps users get sensitized to the new technologies."

Last year, the A & M University's Centre began a cooperative programme with UNDRO to, among other things, evaluate how new technologies are being incorporated into local strategies in developing countries.

Better equipment, Mr. Burke said, has made technology use "ubiquitous" in the developing world. That has permitted local disaster teams to rapidly gather more information from the field during, rather than after, disasters. This has also improved the computer models developed by scientists in the more developed nations.

"Most of the technologies we are talking about now are for field applications", explained Mr. Burke. "As communication becomes cheaper and lighter, it will be able to be used even more by developing countries."

Among the political challenges presented by the Decade are the need to facilitate emergency access by disaster teams to "closed" police or military frequencies and to establish international guidelines on the movement of mobile communications equipment with relief workers.

Interacting to save lives

'A cry for help'

Campion/Sygma

After the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, fire ravaged collapsed buildings.

One of the greatest challenges to professionals working in the field of disaster mitigation is the inevitable chaos and breakdown of communications that can occur as the world responds to a cry for help.

By now, there is no more familiar sight to relief workers than that of poorly-wrapped and unlabelled boxes of emergency donations left unused on airport tarmacs because there is no time to sort them out, or the visits to a disaster-stricken area of foreign VIPs that distract attention from coping with the crisis at hand.

These are only two of a laundry list of examples of why there is such a pressing need for coordination and communication between foreign aid donors and disaster prevention agencies, as well as local relief teams and government officials. As disaster prevention has grown, so has the need to educate those volunteering to help out on the "dos and don'ts" of responding to disasters.

"I network with the public and with ethnic groups in this country to get them to try not to send inappropriate items", said Lisa Mullins, Programme Officer for Foreign Disaster Assistance of the Washington, D.C.-based InterAction network. "A part of my job is to educate people about what's needed in a crisis."

InterAction is a broad coalition of 125 private and voluntary organizations that provide international humanitarian assistance of various kinds, such as development, education, refugee assistance, literacy and international public policy.

InterAction was founded in 1984 as "a professional forum for cooperation, joint planning and an exchange of information" about disasters. Its purpose is to maximize available public and private resources, avoid duplication of efforts by private and voluntary organizations, and encourage preparedness planning.

It also serves as a liaison between such frontline UN agencies as the Office of the UN Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), among others. When a disaster strikes, UNDRO will send emergency teams to assess the needs of the affected community, then alert InterAction, which helps coordinate the response of both voluntary agencies and public donations.

"Some of the principal disaster agencies operate in the United States", explained Ms. Mullins. "There is a strong need for coordination and to compare notes. For example, if an agency has made inroads in a country or has a special contact that might be useful to another group, then we'll pass that information along."

Since time is always of the essence, the coalition uses computer "bulletin boards" to keep member groups abreast of developments. Once the initial critical period of the disaster is over, there still remain many meetings with govern-

ment officials, UN agencies, donor groups and the general public. "After a disaster, we pull together to discuss what each agency is doing", Ms. Mullins stated. "We also meet separately to discuss issues of common concern."

As a coalition of non-governmental groups, InterAction cannot make international policy concerning disaster mitigation, but it can influence such policy. "We do try to bring to bear whatever we can on the United States Government on a given issue", said Ms. Mullins. "We are in contact with the public and aware of how the various communities are feeling about a particular issue."

"NGOs play an increasingly important role in disaster mitigation efforts", said Philippe Boullé, head of UNDRO's New York office. He praised InterAction as "our link" to voluntary agencies.

"Because our work is in the area of sudden disaster, we work closely with groups like Doctors Without Borders and the International Red Cross", Mr. Boullé said. "There are always a lot of logistical problems and a great need for coordination."

The shift in emphasis to disaster preparedness also has meant integrating disaster mitigation into development plans from the beginning, since many countries do not have a national infrastructure capable of managing large-scale programmes.

Similarly, national emergency plans have to be tailored to country resources. It is common for development workers in the field to be involved in training local citizens in communities where contacts and operations are already established. This is particularly true in cases where the disasters are "slow moving" or seasonal, or involve epidemics of disease or famine.

"A tremendous amount can be done on improving mitigation by development workers", said Michael Priestley of UNDP, a senior disaster prevention expert. He cited food security schemes and ways of studying traditional responses to famine as two examples. In the field of health, agriculture, refugee assistance and literacy, "there's an obvious overlap between development and disaster work", he added.

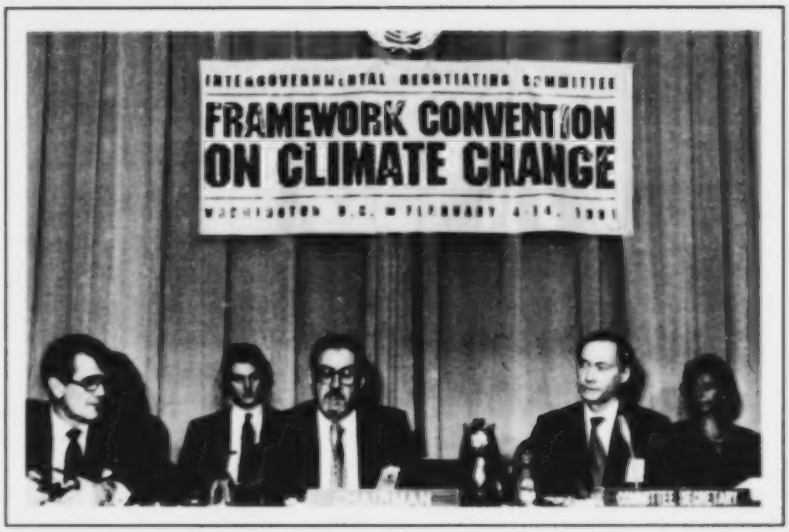
In 1990, InterAction published a pamphlet entitled *Disaster Response: When Good Intentions Aren't Enough*. It spells out what is helpful and what is not in cases of disasters. It is considered a good example of the type of practical information needed by both the public at large and donor groups.

At the top of the "what's helpful" list are cash or credit donations made through international agencies or well-established voluntary organizations. On the "what's not helpful" agenda are donations of clothing and food, which are discouraged, as are "well-intentioned" foreign volunteers. Medicine is helpful only if absolutely fresh and sent through proper distribution channels, such as the Red Cross or the World Health Organization. "We want to educate them, and we also want to encourage their response", Ms. Mullins explained.

UN Photo

Rebuilding after 1983 earthquake in Colombia.

Climate convention negotiations face difficulties, but 1992 target feasible, Chairman says



UN Photo

Committee Chairman Jean Ripert of France opens the session on 4 February.

Expectations were high as the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a framework convention on climate change began its first session at the Westfields International Conference Center in a Washington, DC. suburb on 4 February.

Most delegations hoped for a preliminary draft of the international instrument to reduce global warming. But after two weeks of strenuous deliberations, ending on 14 February, the Committee had agreed only on procedural and organizational matters.

It was not until the final hours of the session that agreement was achieved on negotiation guidelines and working groups. Lack of consensus among regional groups prevented the Committee from electing officers for those groups.

As the session ended, some delegates felt that two precious weeks had been wasted in negotiating on how to negotiate, slowing the process of formulating a text for signature at the UN Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 5 to 12 June 1992.

Committee Chairman Jean Ripert, who also headed the French delegation, had a more upbeat assessment. If there was a will to find a solution, there would be a convention in 12 months, he said. There might be difficulties, but the task was feasible.

Mr. Ripert warned delegates not to leave the session believing that all the Committee had done was talk about procedural things. Establishing working groups and defining their mandates already constituted the beginning of the negotiations. He said delegates should leave the meeting with an awareness of having done useful work.

The Committee is expected to meet three more times before the 1992 Conference: from 1 to 15 June in Nairobi, Kenya; from 9 to 18 September and from 9 to 20 December in Geneva.

Four Committee Vice-Chairmen were elected: Ahmed Djoghlaf of Algeria; Raúl Estrada Oyuela of Argentina; T. Prabhakar Menon of India (later replaced by Chandrashekhar Dasgupta); and Ion Draghici of Romania, who also acted as Rapporteur. Michael Zammit Cutajar was appointed Executive Secretary of the Committee and Director of its ad hoc secretariat.

'In an integrated manner'

Under the negotiation guidelines, all issues should be dealt with "in an integrated manner". Commitments

to provide funds and transfer technology to developing countries should be an integral element in the negotiations.

Working Group I will deal not only with commitments for limiting and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but also with financial and technical assistance, including technology transfers to developing countries.

It will also negotiate enhancement and increase of sinks and reservoirs, and measures to counter the adverse effects of climate change, taking into account that contributions should be equitably differentiated according to countries' responsibilities and level of development.

It will also deal with the special situation of developing countries, taking into account their development needs, including the problems of small island developing countries, low-lying coastal areas and areas threatened by erosion, flooding, desertification and high urban atmospheric pollution, as well as the problems of economies in transition.

Working Group II will consider all necessary legal and institutional mechanisms needed to translate the convention and related commitments into practice.

Some financially-strapped developing countries did not attend the session. The Committee urged contributions to a special voluntary fund set up by the General Assembly to support developing country participation in the negotiating process. As of 13 February, pledged contributions to the fund totalled $1.25 million.

Taking the lead

Representatives from 68 Member States and eight international or non-governmental organizations spoke during the three-day general debate.

In a personal statement at the debate's conclusion, Chairman Ripert saw a general agreement on the need for a common long-term and flexible strategy to implement the convention, with shared responsibilities for eliminating the causes of greenhouse gases.

It had been said that the industrialized countries must take the lead, that they had a responsibility to act immediately. Those countries were committed to that course of action, he added.

UN Photo 177442/M. Grant

Mostafa K. Tolba
UNEP Executive Director

But not all industrialized nations agreed to set specific targets to limit greenhouse gas emissions, including that of carbon dioxide.

Michael R. Deland of the United States, Chairman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality, favoured a convention that would commit all nations to meaningful action, yet would not limit States to some fixed formula.

Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, in a statement to the session, observed that sustainable and ecologically rational development, both in the North and in the South should be rethought, as should "the nature of life itself". His statement was read by Antoine Blanca, Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, who opened the session on the Secretary-General's behalf.

Also speaking at the inaugural meeting was Mostafa K. Tolba, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), who stressed that the convention should stipulate what must be done, by whom, when, how and at what cost. It should set achievable targets for energy efficiency and for afforestation.

G. O. P. Obasi, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), said that in addition to climate change and protection of the atmosphere, negotiations should address fundamental global changes in energy policy and practices, the use of the world's forests, low-cost transfer of energy-efficient technologies to developing countries and funding of development pathways with low greenhouse gas emissions.

In 1988, UNEP and WMO jointly set up the influential International Panel on Climate Change, a scientific and technical expert group. An assessment report by the Panel, providing the most authoritative findings to date on climate change, was the main background document before the Committee at its first session.

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee was created by the General Assembly (resolution 45/212 of 21 December 1990) to conduct "a single intergovernmental negotiating process" on a framework convention on climate change. The Assembly decided that the convention and related instruments should be open for signature at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in June 1992.

EARTH NEWS

An environmental conscience

UN Photo 157430/P. Sudhakaran

The Pantanal wetlands, a protected wildlife refuge in Brazil.

Brazil is launching a $117 million national environmental programme, initially focusing on the Amazon Basin, the Pantanal wetlands and the Atlantic forest and coastal areas, with the help of the World Bank. Its aims are to contain river pollution from agriculture, mining and industry, protect wildlife and forests, and increase the environmental education of the local population.

An $18 million programme in Poland will result in improved air quality in the Katowice-Krakow region, with the Government taking first steps to clean up the heavily polluted upper Vistula River basin.

These and other recent efforts are documented in *"The World Bank and the Environment"*, the Bank's annual report for 1990 on its environment-related activities. The Bank, criticized in the past for not paying enough attention to the environmental impact of its projects, in 1989 embarked on an ambitious three-year effort to make environmental concerns an integral part of its activities.

It assists countries, such as Burkina Faso, Burundi, Guinea and Tunisia, develop environmental strategies. The focus is on preservation of natural habitats and countering land degradation, depletion of fresh water resources, urban, industrial and agricultural pollution and degradation of the "global commons"—that is, fighting environmental problems that transcend boundaries, such as ozone depletion.

The 102-page report offers an overview of the Bank's current environmental policies and activities, including research and lending operations. It also explains how the Bank's environmental work is being organized and staffed.

Efforts to protect the environment and mitigate potential adverse effects of certain World Bank investments on local populations in Botswana, India and Brazil took "considerable staff effort" during 1990, the Bank reports.

Acknowledging the controversial nature of some of those projects, the Bank says that introducing a more systematic environmental assessment in its work "should reduce such problems in the future". However, it would also mean that "project monitoring is likely, on balance, to require much greater attention than in the past".

Projects considered controversial, now being environmentally supervised, include the National Land Management and Livestock Project in Botswana, the Sardar Sarovar Dam and the Singrauli Thermal Power Project in India, the Kedung Ombo project in Indonesia, and the Caraias Iron Ore project and the Northwest III Settlement Project (Polonoroeste) in Brazil.

As to the institution's future directions, "improved understanding of the links between poverty and environment remains a priority", the report says.

"Good environmental policy is good development policy in almost every sense", World Bank President Barber Conable stated in London on 19 March at a conference sponsored by the daily newspaper *The Observer* and the International Institute for Environment and Development.

Mr. Conable added that the Bank "must also be an environmental agency". During the fiscal year ending 30 June 1990, about half of the development projects it supported included environmental-protection measures.

An environmental catalyst is born

The Global Environment Facility, an innovative UN effort to fund environmentally sound management in developing countries, has been promised up to $1.5 billion in government contributions.

The Facility, which will function as a catalyst to attract large environmental investments, will be administered by the World Bank,

which will jointly implement it with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Development Programme. The three institutions are actively involved in environmental work and have broad expertise in providing technical assistance to developing countries.

Facility Chairman Ernest Stern, World Bank Senior Vice-President in charge of finance, expects the new pilot programme to be operating before mid-1991. The decision to establish the Facility was taken in November 1990 in Paris by a group of 25 developed and developing countries, following French and German initiatives.

The Facility has four objectives: to fight global warming; to preserve areas of rich ecological diversity; to protect international waters from pollution; and to halt the destruction of the ozone layer. It will provide concessional funding for investment projects and related activities in all four areas.

To fight global warming, the Facility will focus on energy conservation, promotion of energy sources that do not contribute to the problem, and forestry management and reforestation. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, the major global warming agent.

To halt ozone layer destruction, the Facility will help countries make the transition from production and use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons and other gases to less damaging substitutes.

Saving the ozone

Stringent international targets to completely phase out ozone-depleting chemicals by the end of the century came into effect on 7 March 1991. The new targets, agreed on in London in June 1990, replace the partial reduction targets agreed upon in 1987 under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

The strengthened Protocol requires a complete phase-out by 1 January 2000 of the use and production of CFCs and other ozone-depleting chemicals.

Amendments to the Protocol, which add new substances to the list of controlled chemicals, including methyl chloroform and carbon tetrachloride, will become effective on 1 January 1992, provided that at least 20 countries have ratified them.

Wildlife survival

One million species of wildlife may have been lost forever since 1988, when negotiations on an international legal instrument on biological diversity were launched by UNEP.

These alarming statistics were released by UNEP, as the Ad Hoc Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on Biological Diversity held its second session (25 February-6 March, Nairobi). More than 220 delegates from 71 countries, five international organizations and seven non-governmental organizations discussed a draft convention prepared by the UNEP secretariat. The next session is to be held in Spain in June.

Children and the environment

"Environmental degradation is killing children." That is the alarming message of the 73-page report—*Children and the Environment*—published jointly by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and (UNEP) in 1990.

The two organizations examined the effect of environmental quality on the child in the womb, on infants and children, as well as the special problems of children at work and those in distress. The study finds that "children are too often the victims of pollution—their young bodies make them far more vulnerable than adults to the poisons we spew into the air, and toxins we sow on Earth".

It states that global warming, ozone depletion, loss of genetic resources, desertification and general land degradation are "this generation's legacy to its descendants".

Before it is too late, the report urges, "intergenerational equity", which incorporates the welfare of future generations into developmental planning, must be implemented. UNICEF and UNEP warn that achieving it could be "the foremost challenge facing policy makers in the closing years of the twentieth century, and beyond".

UN Photo 177514/P Sudhakaran

As part of a youth forum sponsored by UNEP, children signed a "Kids For Saving Earth Promise" at UN Headquarters in New York.

UNCTAD VIII to be held in Colombia, Situation of LDCs considered

UN Photo 150829

Washing black ore at Philippines mine site.

"Strengthening national and international action and multilateral cooperation for a healthy, secure and equitable world economy" will be the theme of the eighth session of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD VIII).

The 130-member Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD, at its spring session (11-22 March, Geneva), also accepted the Government of Colombia's offer to hold the session in Cartagena de Indias, from 8 to 25 February 1992.

Resources for development, international trade, technology, services and commodities will be the major topics at the international forum on North-South economic issues. Some 3,000 participants, including delegates from UNCTAD's 166 member States and representatives of UN system bodies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, are expected to attend.

The decision followed an 8 February announcement that Uruguay, citing an inability to provide the necessary facilities in time, had withdrawn its offer to host the session in Punta del Este, originally scheduled for 21 September to 8 October 1991.

Middle East reconstruction

Kenneth K. S. Dadzie, Secretary-General of UNCTAD, said on 11 March that the UN could help build confidence and establish the "economic underpinnings" of peace in the Middle East through reconstruction, which eventually would foster mutually beneficial economic linkages. Such a programme, he added, should include a new forum "to build the fabric of economic interlinkages, including multinational projects in such sectors as investment, trade and transport".

The Board's newly-elected President, Emilio Artacho Castellano of Spain, said "new and imaginative solutions" to economic and social problems were needed more than ever before to address developments relating to the transition to market economies in Eastern and Central Europe and the economic impact of the Persian Gulf crisis.

'The weakest partners'

Urgent assistance to least developed countries (LDCs) was urged by the Board, which expressed deep concern at the adverse consequences of "unforeseen external developments" on the economies of LDCs.

The Least Developed Countries 1990 Report (TD/B/1289 (Vols. I and II)), released at the meeting, states that the 42 LDCs, with a combined population of 440 million, are the "weakest partners" in the international community.

The 76-page study warns that the expected slowdown in world economic activity resulting from the Gulf military conflict, financial instability in the United States and growing difficulties connected with the conversion of political and economic systems in Eastern Europe particularly threatens the more vulnerable LDCs.

Most LDCs are likely to suffer, it states, from depressed terms of trade, reduced remittances from tourism and a drop in official development assistance (ODA).

Economic growth in those countries is expected to be from 0.75 to 1.25 per cent less than forecast during the first year of the Programme of Action for the 1990s, adopted at the August 1990 Paris Conference on LDCs.

The Report also covers the debt burden of LDCs and the need for further debt relief, informal micro-enterprise sector, women and development, and environmental problems.

African economic recovery

In a text representing the UNCTAD contribution to the General Assembly's final review and appraisal of the implementation of the UN Programme of Action for African Recovery and Development (1986-1990), the Board reaffirmed the "primary responsibility of African countries for their economic recovery and development in an environment which offered equal opportunities to men and women to participate fully in the development process". Moreover, it called for continued international support and urged the international community, among other things, to provide additional resources, especially ODA.

Impasse on trade issues

Delegates to the Board's session were unable to agree on the topic of protectionism and structural adjustment. A draft introduced by the "Group of 77" developing countries would have urged UNCTAD members to establish mechanisms to evaluate and review protectionist measures. Developed countries would have been asked to reduce and eliminate discriminatory and frequent tariff and non-tariff measures directed against exports of developing countries.

Reflecting concern that decision-making during the Uruguay Round trade negotiations—set up under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade—did not adequately include their participation, the draft would also have had the Board request that the concerns expressed regarding the Round be transmitted to the Chairman of the Trade Negotiating Committee and that developed country participants in the negotiations take such concerns into account. Moreover, it also would have urged more favourable treatment of developing countries, including increased market access for exports and strengthening of the infrastructure and technological capacities of developing countries.

UN Photo

FAO warns of African food shortages

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) in March warned that food supply problems in Africa were growing "acute". Although low-income, food-deficit countries as a whole have had a record harvest in 1990, cereal production in Africa had declined.

Fifteen African countries faced exceptional food shortages. Several Sahelian countries were experiencing food supply problems following poor harvests in late 1990, FAO reported. Drought and civil strife in a number of nations also caused serious situations.

The Executive Board of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), acting on what it predicted would be a serious shortfall in food production due to drought and a worsening of existing widespread poverty in rural areas, endorsed on 24 January the second phase of its Special Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa. The first phase, which raised some $300 million for 26 projects in 20 of Africa's poorest countries, was initiated in 1986 following two years of devastating drought.

Screwworm eradication

Another threat to Africa's food supply, particularly in North Africa, is the "New World" screwworm fly, a parasitic insect which feeds on the living flesh of warm-blooded animals. Representatives from 48 donor countries and international organizations on 12 February pledged some $15 million at the second Pledging Conference on Screwworm Eradication in North Africa, sponsored by IFAD and FAO.

The funds will support the IFAD-initiated and funded pilot project, co-financed by the African Development Bank, the UN Development Programme and FAO, in releasing sterile insects in the North African environment as a means of breaking the life cycle of the screwworm fly.

The programme operates out of the Rome-based Screwworm Emergency Centre for North Africa, set up in June 1990 at FAO Headquarters. At the first Pledging Conference in July 1990, $31 million was pledged and Libya, the most seriously affected country, later pledged $27 million.

UN Photo 129980J Frank

Food supply problems followed poor harvests in late 1990, FAO reported.
***Above*, emergency distribution in southern Ethiopia.**

Africa's economy: Marginal improvement in 1990

Under-Secretary-General Adebayo Adedeji, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in January stated that economic restructuring and perseverance with policy reforms and adjustment efforts had led to only marginal improvement in Africa's economy in 1990.

He reported that per capita growth rates had remained negative, "as population pressure continued unabated while the growing scourge of inflation and unemployment, and the dehumanizing shortage of the most basic of essentials and necessities of life persisted".

Special relief programmes and "far-reaching measures" were needed, especially in the areas of commodities, debt and resource flows.

The General Assembly Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole in September will review and appraise the Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (1986-1990), adopted at the Assembly's special session in May 1986. The Ad Hoc body will assess Africa's economic performance and measures needed to sustain accelerated growth and development beyond 1991.

Salim Lone, Chief of Information for the UN Africa Recovery Programme, has stated that during 1990 more African countries had introduced multi-party politics than in the previous 25 years combined. Africa was showing itself to be "serious about both political and economic reforms", but he stressed that political reforms would not work if poor economic conditions persisted.

New strategy needed

A 15-member UN expert group on Africa's commodity problems, chaired by former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, in a 165-page report *(A/45/581)* issued in October 1990, stated that an explicit commodity strategy would be vital for African economic growth and adjustment. "African policy makers must use commodity production and trade as a motor for expansion", the group stated.

It advocates a profound "change in attitude" about commodity markets: greater emphasis on new product varieties; exploitation of previously untouched resources; investments in exploitation of additional commodity reserves; and association with foreign interests to strengthen marketing and distribution.

Also stressed are increased reliance on African food crops; attainment of food security at the household, national and regional levels; diversification to enlarge the export base; increased export earnings from primary and processed commodities; development of intra-African cooperation and trade; more effective cooperation between commodity producers and consumers; and a halt to desertification and reversal of environmental degradation.

Decades for Africa

The UN plans to highlight transport, communications and industrial development in Africa in the 1990s. In 1988, the Assembly declared the Second Transport and Communications Decade in Africa (1991-2000). The first Decade (1978-1988) provided policy and strategy measures, as well as institutions and mechanisms for their implementation, the ECA reported.

In 1989, the Assembly proclaimed the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa (1991-2000). The first Decade (the 1980s) aimed to mobilize greater political commitment to, and financial support for, Africa's industrialization.

Experts predict slow economic growth in 1991

The world economy is expected to grow slowly in 1991, with the level of per capita output falling for the second year in a row, according to economic forecasting experts from 40 countries and regional centres attending a two-day meeting (6-8 March, New York). The Expert Group on Short- and Medium-Term Projections of the World Economy—known as "Project LINK"—said the temporary surge in oil prices during the Gulf crisis, the disruption of trade, and curtailment of worker remittances reinforced recessionary tendencies in many parts of an already weakening world economy.

The experts combined their analysis of recent economic developments in their own countries with UN forecasts, using the econometric world model of Project LINK, in association with economists from the Universities of Pennsylvania and Toronto.

The Group, chaired by Nobel Laureate Professor Lawrence Klein, placed the average world economic growth at slightly more than 1 per cent in 1991, about the same as in 1990. The continued slowdown would be reflected in reduced world trade growth and in lower or unchanged non-oil commodity prices, which would further curtail developing countries' revenues, it felt.

The experts predicted an improvement in world economic output in 1992 and a continued growth of about 3 per cent per annum through 1995. They warned that in most developing countries, that rate would be only slightly higher than likely population growth.

Development Report

Science and technology meeting emphasizes environment

The UN Advisory Committee on Science and Technology for Development, at its eleventh session (14-18 January, New York), stressed that developing countries should incorporate an autonomous decision-making capacity in the area of science and technology for development. Environmental issues should be emphasized, the Committee stated. International negotiations for a global environmental management regime are likely to be difficult given their effect on a wide range of economic activities, including agriculture and industrial production and consumption, it added.

The Committee's report will be presented at the eleventh sesssion of the Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development (22 April to 3 May, New York).

Public sector role in development

Participants from 19 developing countries took part in a UN interregional seminar (9-15 January, Nairobi, Kenya) on the role of the public sector in promoting the economic development of developing countries, organized by the UN Department of Technical Cooperation for Development, in cooperation with the UN Environment Programme. The significance of the public sector, especially as custodian of overall political and economic decision-making, had not changed much, the seminar concluded. Its role, participants said, should include provision for a stable regulatory framework of law and order, and an objective and open judicial system, infrastructural support in physical and human services, guidance and coordination in strategic economic policy-making and participation in economic and commercial operations.

New World Bank chief

Lewis T. Preston, former chief executive officer of J. P. Morgan & Company, a prestigious United States-based commercial bank, is expected to succeed Barber B. Conable Jr. as President of the 155-member World Bank in September 1991. Mr. Preston, 64, who retired from J.P. Morgan in 1989, also served as head of its international banking department from 1968 to 1976. He is expected to concentrate efforts on resolving the debt crisis of developing countries as a means to improving living standards. Mr. Conable's term expires 30 June. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund annual meetings are scheduled for 15 to 17 October 1991 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Developing countries' stock markets decline

Stock markets in developing countries lost 32 per cent of their value in United States dollar terms in 1990, the International Finance Corporation, a World Bank affiliate, reported in February. Volatility in the markets was unusually high during that year, with the Gulf area crisis hastening a year-end slump. Other causes were the "bursting of speculative bubbles", pessimism over prospects for economic growth at home and abroad, and sudden credit crunches.

Despite the plunge, eight of the world's best performing markets were in developing countries. Venezuela topped the list with a market gain of 556 per cent by the end of 1990.

The downturn is the first since 1984, when the IFC began compiling the composite index, which tracks more than 800 stocks in 20 stock markets in developing countries.

UNDP Governing Council meets

Newly-elected President of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Governing Council for 1991, Ramiro Piriz-Ballon of Uruguay, at the Council's organizational session (19-22 February, New York), stressed the important role of UNDP in establishing a bridge between North and South.

UNDP Administrator William H. Draper III on 19 February announced the establishment of a UNDP Gulf Task Force.

The 48-member Council is scheduled to hold its thirty-eighth session in New York from 3 to 21 June. Preparation for the next five-year programming cycle (1992-1997) will be a major item.

Social development body recommends principles to protect the elderly

UN Photo 148466/ Steele

An action programme for the ageing was endorsed by the General Assembly in 1990.

Legal protection for the rights of the elderly emerged as a key issue at the thirty-second session of the Commission for Social Development (11-21 February, Vienna). The 32-member Commission recommended that the Economic and Social Council—its parent body—transmit a resolution to the General Assembly, by which the new United Nations Principles for Older Persons would be adopted.

The text, sponsored by 16 countries, asked the Assembly to recommend a two-day international conference on ageing during its 1992 session to consolidate targets on ageing for the year 2001 and to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the 1982 International Plan of Action on Ageing, on which the Principles are based.

It would also encourage special attention to implementing the action programme on ageing for 1992 and beyond, as endorsed by the Assembly in December 1990. At that time, the Assembly designated 1 October as the International Day for the Elderly.

The 18 principles aim to ensure for the ageing, equal access to the necessities of life in an environment free of discrimination and abuse and which encourages their integration into society in a fulfilling manner. Their purpose—"to add life to the years that have been added to life"—encompasses the thematic areas of independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity.

The text calls for older persons to have access to adequate food, water, shelter, clothing, health care, and educational and training programmes. They should be able to reside at home as long as possible and remain integrated in society by sharing their skills and knowledge and serving as volunteers, it is stated.

A 'grey revolution'

Julia Tavares de Alvarez of the Dominican Republic, a leading proponent in the Commission of the rights of older persons, said on 11 February that a "grey revolution" was already under way. She noted that the percentage of the aged in the population was expected to reach almost 15 per cent of the world population before the year 2025, with 60 per cent of the elderly population residing in developing countries.

Among the other topics discussed this year by the Commission were the International Year of the Family (1994), the world social situation, disabled persons, Africa's critical social situation, the integration of young people into society, strategies for social development cooperation and the interrelationship between economic growth and human welfare.

The Commission, which meets every two years to review the global social situation and UN activities in the field of social development and social welfare, approved 13 texts during its two-week session, including a request to the Secretary-General to identify the Vienna-based Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs as the social policy focal point for countries undergoing economic and social adjustments.

Commission Chairman Elsie Mbella Ngomba of Cameroon asked that measures be defined to protect society's most vulnerable groups. Meaningful social progress required international commitment through respect for human life and the positive aspects of social and cultural diversities and values.

Opportunities for disabled

Sweden, Austria and Spain announced their contributions to help fund an expert working group established by the Commission to draft an international instrument that would set rules to equalize opportunities for the disabled.

The Commission approved texts whereby the Economic and Social Council would support UN assistance to Member States to establish and strengthen national committees on disability. Member States, regional commissions and intergovernmental and other organizations, in cooperation with disabled persons groups, would be asked to adopt an integrated policy approach to disability issues.

The Council was also urged to recommend that the 1992 General Assembly devote four plenary meetings to mark the conclusion of the UN Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992) by formulating a long-term strategy to implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons to the year 2000 and beyond.

Family Year, world social situation

The Commission approved a draft resolution by which the Assembly would invite all States to establish national mechanisms, such as coordinating committees, to help observe the International Year of the Family (1994). The Year's theme is "Family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world".

During the Commission session, a voluntary fund for the Year was set up to help countries develop family-oriented policies and to provide technical support to Governments.

A 24-page report *(E/CN.5/1991/2)* reviewed by the Commission detailed major concerns and specific issues regarding families, activities for the Year, evaluation and follow-up, and objectives and principles, among other things. In debate, delegates referred to refugee families, the role and responsibility of fathers, single parents and accessibility to health and child care.

Following a review of the world social situation *(see page 67)*, the Commission appealed to Governments to study fundamental social problems, such as poverty, provision of food, shelter, clothing and housing, income security and equal opportunities for all as a "matter of urgency".

It also invited the UN to focus on the requirements of specific population groups, asking for more action-oriented measures to promote the integration of such groups into society.

UN Photo 145903Y Nagata

Training the mentally handicapped at a Manhattan institute.

Other action

The Commission also recommended creation of an open-ended ad hoc working group to review progress and obstacles in implementing the objectives of the International Youth Year, observed in 1985, and to prepare a draft world youth programme of action to the year 2000 and beyond.

By a draft recommended for Assembly action, the interrelationship between economic growth and human welfare would be recognized as a principal theme of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth UN Development Decade (the 1990s), adopted by the Assembly in December 1990. The Secretary-General would be asked to strengthen advisory services to Governments, especially those of developing countries.

World social situation: In transition

The decade of the 1980s saw the social situation in many countries vary from those exhibiting "solid improvements" to some demonstrating "unprecedented reversals", to others that underwent "radical changes" in their economic and social institutions. These were among the conclusions of an interim UN report *(A/46/56-E/1991/6)* on the world social situation, discussed by the Commission for Social Development at its February meeting.

The 33-page document provides an overview of institutional changes and the size and role of government; growing concern with social services and welfare issues; environmental issues; drug abuse; and the "peace dividend", expected to result from the easing of tensions between the USSR and the United States.

Reduced ideological conflict, the growth of scientific knowledge of the relationship between the economy and the environment, and a "deeper commitment" by Governments to seek solutions to common problems were seen as catalysts for international cooperation in the 1990s.

The report states that the most prominent and radical transformations were in those countries with formerly centrally-planned economies, now in transition to market economies. Changes there have affected major political institutions, property rights, the organization of economic activity and social security, and welfare benefits.

Eradication of poverty and improvement in living conditions emerged as key priorities of both Governments and intergovernmental organizations in the late 1980s. Poverty affected nearly half of the Asian population, and living conditions in Africa and Latin America either stagnated or dropped during the decade, it was stated.

Environment, drugs and the 'peace dividend'

The current report cites a better understanding of the "fragile nature of the world ecosystem", a growing awareness of the possibility of preserving the environment and an emerging willingness to recognize that poverty, as much as affluence, has harmful effects on the environment—elements that have "converged" to bring environment issues to the forefront of the political agenda.

Drug abuse, it states, has "implications for policies in a number of areas: health, crime prevention and criminal justice, incomes and employment and political stability". Governments have responded to a rapid increase during the 1980s in drug abuse, with educational and curative programmes to break the cycle of addiction. The General Assembly has proclaimed 1991-2000 as the UN Decade Against Drug Abuse.

The magnitude of an anticipated "peace dividend"—a reallocation of resources from military to civilian uses on a large scale—could be overestimated, according to the report. Such reallocation, which could have bolstered both social development programmes and official development assistance, would also be negatively affected by the Gulf crisis, the report said. In both developed and developing countries, Governments may have to spend substantial sums on retraining and redeploying military personnel.

A major report on the world social situation is prepared every four years by the UN. The most recent was issued in 1989; the next is scheduled for 1993.

A 'society for all'

"Social problems are on everyone's lips", said Margaret Anstee, Director-General of the UN Office at Vienna, "and yet occupy a low place in national and international priorities." It is in the social area that progress is likely to be made in "breaking the log-jam of international cooperation on economic and social matters", because social problems are "common to all" and common approaches, suited to individual countries' needs, can be adopted "without threatening, or appearing to threaten, other countries' interests".

She spoke on 30 January at a three-day information meeting in Moscow on the subject: "United Nations Towards the Year 2000".

Ms. Anstee outlined a policy framework for the 1990s and beyond to deal with the emerging social development perspective in the United Nations. Social development must be the "cornerstone", she said, of any effective development strategy. It should forge a sense of community and shared values, respect the equal worth of individuals, allow for individual initiative and enterprise, and create a "society for all" that cares about its "casualties" and its "marginalized" members.

UN Commission proposes action to prohibit violence against women

China offers to host fourth women's conference

Action to prohibit violence against women, ensure equal opportunities for disabled women and give priority to international protection of refugee and displaced women and children was recommended by the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fifth session (27 February-8 March, Vienna).

The 43-member body also launched preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace.

Fifteen resolutions, which also focused on women in vulnerable situations—including migrants, prostitutes and battered women—and the integration of women in development, were approved by the Commission. Most texts will go to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly for final adoption later this year.

The Commission asked that discussions start on the possibility of preparing an international instrument that explicitly addresses the issue of violence against women. The first step should be to develop a framework for that instrument, in consultation with the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). An expert meeting on this issue should be convened in 1991 or 1992, with the participation of CEDAW and the Committee on Crime Prevention and Control, the Commission specified.

"Violence against women is an issue of equal rights that derives from a power imbalance between women and men in society", the Commission stated. It urged Governments to adopt, strengthen and enforce legislation prohibiting such violence and to take administrative, social and educational measures to protect women from all forms of physical or mental violence.

UN Photo 136560/B. Lane

Governments were also urged to ensure "the full and explicit integration of women's concerns" in development policies. International financial and technical assistance to specific development programmes should continue, the Commission stressed.

Migrant women should be provided with information and assistance regarding immigration, labour, financial and other relevant laws and regulations, as well as on conditions of work and of life in the State of employment. States were invited to sign and ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, adopted by the Assembly in 1990.

International measures should be taken to ensure greater protection for refugee women and children from physical violence, sexual abuse, abduction and circumstances that could force them into illegal activities.

The Commission recommended that all refugee women and, wherever possible, children should have non-discriminatory access to individual identification and registration documents, irrespective of whether they are accompanied by a male family member.

A representative of the human rights group Amnesty International told the Commission that women refugees and asylum seekers had often been the victims of sexual

abuse by police, soldiers or other government agents. Rape was seen as a form of persecution that drove many women abroad, and sexual favours were frequently the price for relief goods or asylum documentation. Amnesty International stated that it had documented, in a report entitled "Women on the Front Line", gross violations against women in more than 40 countries around the world.

Other recommendations dealt with the world conference on women in 1995, women and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) prevention, national machineries for the advancement of women, and women in South Africa and occupied Palestinian territories.

1995 world conference

The fourth world conference on women in 1995 will consider a draft programme of action prepared by the Commission, focusing on a number of issues identified as fundamental obstacles to the advancement of women throughout the world. (Three previous global meetings were held in Mexico City, 1975; Copenhagen, 1980; and Nairobi, 1985). The conference will also conduct a second review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.

The programme will include special measures to increase the proportion of women involved in economic, social and political decision-making; strengthening worldwide efforts to end illiteracy among women by the year 2000; and establishing specific programmes to improve the condition of women living in poverty.

It will also call for specific projects related to health; prevention of violence in the family, the workplace and society; new and advanced technologies and scientific research to benefit women; and special programmes for refugee, displaced and migrant women and girls and those living in conflict areas.

Four possible slogans to promote the conference were also decided on: "Remove the Obstacles Now"; "Women: Half the World—Half the Power"; "Women: Mobilizing for Power—Acting for Change"; and "Social Justice for Women".

The Commission also noted China's offer to host the 1995 world conference, postponing a decision on the venue until 1992.

Governments' AIDS-control programmes should benefit women, targeting them through developing preventive policies and awareness campaigns, with input from women themselves. Those infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) should have access to the necessary health care, including treatment at affordable cost and social services.

National machinery for the advancement of women should be set up by Governments as soon as possible, at the latest by 1995. They should have access to the highest levels of Government and be provided with the political, financial, technical and human resources necessary to function effectively. The UN and the international community should make it a priority to help countries in this task.

South Africa, Palestinians

By a draft resolution on women and children in South Africa, all parties engaged in negotiations for a post-apartheid society would be urged to ensure that the principle of equality between women and men was incorporated in all laws and institutions.

The unconditional release by 30 April of all political prisoners and detainees, among them women and children, was also demanded.

A text on Palestinian women reaffirmed that basic improvement of their living conditions, advancement, full equality and self-reliance could be achieved only by an end to Israeli occupation and the attainment of the Palestinians' right to return, to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Countries casting a negative vote or abstaining on these drafts expressed sympathy for the plight of women and children under apartheid and in the occupied territories, but objected to some political elements of the texts.

The 12-member European Community felt that those political issues went beyond the Commission's mandate. Japan said that those issues should be addressed in an appropriate forum. Canada and the United States considered that the text on women and children in South Africa ignored recent progress regarding apartheid in South Africa.

The United States called the Palestinian text "one-sided and unbalanced", stating it did not help alleviate the condition of women and children.

Other issues

The Commission encouraged States to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women at all levels, recommending an increase in the number of women in senior policy level and decision-making posts at the UN.

The United States proposed a draft by which a Commission working group would consider communications concerning discrimination against women. It was deferred. The working group, if created, would hold closed meetings before each Commission session to draw attention to situations appearing to reveal a consistent pattern of reliably attested discrimination against women.

Refugee women are focus of International Women's Day

The world's estimated 8 million female refugees—over half of the total refugee population—were the focus of International Women's Day on 8 March. "None have more fully demonstrated the capacity of women to cope and prevail than those women", Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar said in his traditional message for the Day.

Visions of women's potential for leadership were explored at "Making Women Count in the 1990s", a panel discussion held at UN Headquarters. Refugees, women and development issues, and women and work were other topics discussed by panelists Catherine O'Neill, Winn Newman and Dr. Nafis Sadik.

Ms. O'Neill works with the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children; Mr. Newman, a lawyer, has successfully argued landmark legal cases in the United States on equal pay for work of comparable value; and Dr. Sadik is the Executive Director of the UN Population Fund. Author Erskine Childers, formerly with the UN Development Programme, was the moderator. The keynote speaker was former United States Congress member and Vice-Presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro.

In the Headquarters' public lobby, an exhibit—"Building the Future with Women"—was opened by the UN Development Fund for Women.

The feminization of poverty in its region was highlighted on International Women's Day by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Discriminatory treatment of women and feminization of poverty go hand in hand, according to the Commission's *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 1990*. Female wages are, on average, two thirds those of men. Distribution of income, land and credit is heavily skewed towards men. And two out of every three illiterates are women.

Exploitation of women workers in family enterprises decried

Women who work in family enterprises without payment are being exploited, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) declared, calling for guaranteed payment, social security and social benefits for them.

As it concluded its tenth annual session (21 January-1 February, New York), the Committee also recommended that the value of women's domestic work be added to countries' gross national products. Nations should provide information on disabled women and on measures taken to ensure equal access for them to education, employment, health services and social security.

The 23-member watchdog body monitors how countries implement the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

At this year's session, it scrutinized for the first time the situations in Burkina Faso and Italy. Second reports from Austria, Denmark, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Rwanda and Yugoslavia were also studied; their representatives were vigorously questioned by the experts.

The 103 States parties are required to submit an initial report within one year of accession to the Convention, and periodic reports at least every four years.

UN Photo 150947/C. Redenius

'A promise to children'

UNICEF pushes efforts to cut child deaths, hunger

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has made a "promise to children"—to try to end child deaths and child malnutrition on today's scale by the year 2000. The Fund estimates that a quarter of a million children die every week from common illnesses and one in three in the world are stunted by malnutrition.

That broad goal, declared on 30 September 1990 by 71 Presidents and Prime Ministers attending the first World Summit for Children, includes 20 specific targets detailed in the Plan of Action for implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, adopted at the Summit.

Among them are: one-third reduction in under-five death rates; halving of maternal mortality rates; halving of severe and moderate malnutrition among the world's under-fives; safe water and sanitation for all families; and measures covering protection for women and girls, nutrition, child health and education.

Other goals include making family planning available to all couples and cutting deaths from diarrhoeal diseases—which kill approximately 4 million young children annually—by one half, and pneumonia—which kills another 4 million a year—by one third.

UNICEF Executive Director James P. Grant on 5 February told the Fund's Executive Board that 1990 had been "probably the most momentous year for children in history".

Ratification and promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, unanimously adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 1989, were urged by the world leaders at the Summit. As of 31 January 1991, 130 States had signed the Convention, which entered into force on 2 September 1990, and 71 countries had either ratified or acceded to it.

Ten members were elected to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It is expected to hold its first session in mid-September to begin drawing up guidelines for use by States parties in the preparation of their reports on the condition of children.

UNICEF/1159/84

Children being treated for malnutrition at an Angolan hospital.

Immunization saves millions

The 128-page report—*The State of the World's Children 1991*—released on 19 December 1990, states that its 10-year effort to immunize 80 per cent of the developing world's

children by the end of 1990—a rise from about 15 per cent in 1980—has added impetus to the idea of defining internationally-agreed targets.

Some 12 million young lives have been saved and 1.5 million children were prevented from being crippled by polio by the immunization campaign, the organization reports.

Richard Jolly, Deputy Executive Director for Programmes of UNICEF, on 5 February said that programme expenditure had increased by an estimated 8 per cent, with roughly half of the health expenditure devoted to immunization of children.

Of special importance are vaccines against measles—the biggest killer among the vaccine-preventable diseases—which kills some 1.5 million children per year, and neonatal tetanus, which kills some 800,000 infants each year and can be prevented by immunizing all women of child-bearing age.

Polio, UNICEF says, is likely to be the next major disease to be eliminated, following the eradication of smallpox in the 1970s.

The Consultative Group for the Children's Vaccine Initiative, established at the Summit, met from 3 to 5 February to discuss plans for developing improved vaccines to immunize the world's children. The Initiative is intended to improve existing vaccines and introduce essential new ones.

The Group consists of bilateral donors, scientific and medical experts, and representatives from the Rockefeller Foundation, the World Health Organization, the UN Development Programme, UNICEF and the World Bank.

'The largest generation'

UNICEF reports that, given present trends, the number of children born annually is predicted to peak around the year 2000 and then begin to fall. Therefore, children of the 1990s may be "the largest generation ever entrusted to mankind", with some 1.5 billion births expected during the decade.

If the "promise to children" is to be kept, the report states, then spending priorities in both industrialized and developing countries must be re-examined. Close to $20 billion a year—one eighth of 1 per cent of the world's annual income—would be needed to meet health, nutrition, education and water and sanitation goals for the next decade.

Developing countries, the Fund says, will probably have to find about two thirds of that amount with the remainder expected to come in debt relief and aid increases from the industrialized world.

The Fund emphasizes that the means are available to save millions of children from ill-health, poor growth and early death. One way is to make vaccines, oral rehydration salts, antibiotics, growth charts, iron tablets, vitamin A supplements and family planning services—all relatively low-cost technologies—available to all.

In addition, a "communications revolution for the poor" is required to inform parents about such concepts as birth spacing, pregnancy and child birth, breast-feeding, safe weaning methods, growth promotion, preventing and coping with illnesses, and preventing the spread of AIDS.

UNICEF advocates training individual community health workers to relay information on techniques and methods, which it says could cost as little as $500, as opposed to more than $70,000 for a fully qualified doctor.

Addressing the problem of rapid population growth, UNICEF argues that reducing child deaths is essential to the process of reducing birth rates. It states that "when child deaths have fallen to the point of being very unlikely, then family size becomes more predictable and controllable, confidence begins to grow, and family planning becomes more attractive". Economic progress and improvement in the lives of women, including the education of girls and women, UNICEF says, would also reduce births.

UNICEF 75884/Nepal/H. Larson

Nepalese village children.

Population conference set for 1994; Ageing, international migration examined

"Population, Sustained Economic Growth and Sustainable Development" has been selected as the theme for the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. That was among the decisions of the Population Commission at its biennial session (27 February-8 March, New York).

The 27-member Commission also discussed ageing and internal and international migration, including refugees, family planning programmes, the status of women, the global impact of AIDS, declining fertility rates and problems relating to youth dependency in developing countries.

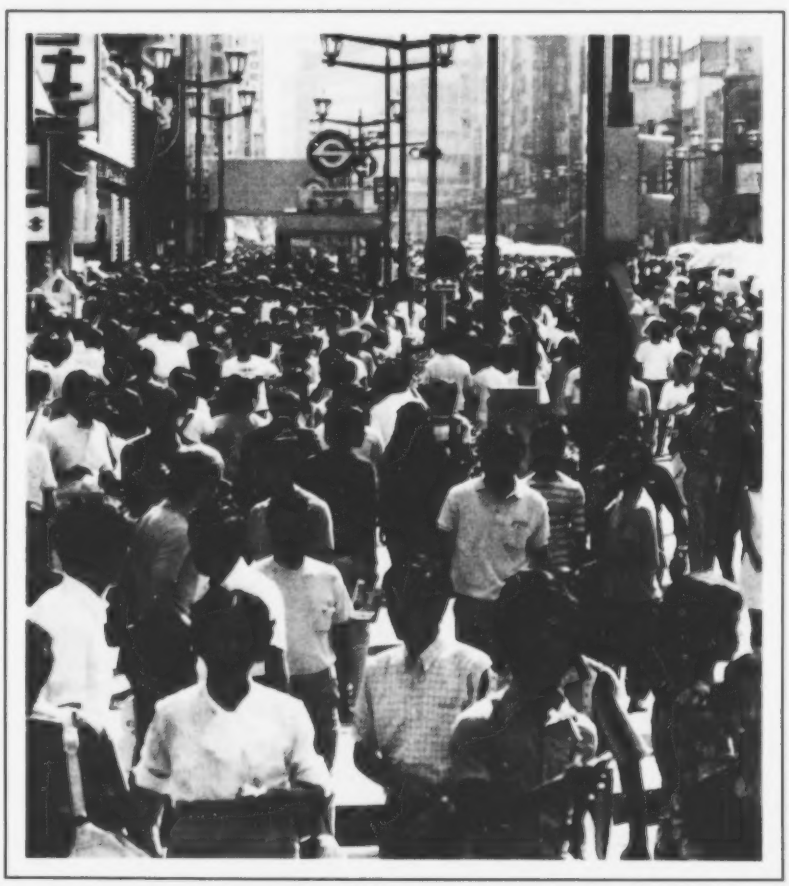
Fifth UN population conference

Dr. Nafis Sadik, Executive Director of the UN Population Fund and Secretary-General of the Conference, said preparations for the event reflected the enormous needs and challenges of the future, as well as the notable advances that had been made in the population field, particularly by developing countries in implementing policies and programmes.

Egypt and Tunisia both have offered to host the Conference, scheduled for August 1994. Further preparatory meetings are planned in August 1993 and early 1994.

It would be the fifth international population conference convened by the UN. Conferences held in Rome in 1954 and in Belgrade in 1965 were purely technical meetings, limited to scientific discussions on population topics. Subsequent intergovernmental conferences in Bucharest in 1974 and in Mexico City in 1984 were concerned with establishing objectives, principles and goals, and making recommendations in the population field.

The objectives proposed for the next conference were: to appraise the progress made and identify the obstacles encountered in implementing the 1974 World Population Plan of Action; to adopt recommendations for the next decade to respond to population and development issues; to strengthen awareness of population issues and their linkage to international development; and to enhance the mobilization, at national and international levels, of resources needed by developing countries to implement future action.



UN Photo 125561

Charlotte Hoehn of Germany, Commission Chairman, said that the 1994 Conference should draft a second version of the 1974 World Population Plan.

Expert group meetings in 1992 and 1993 are planned to discuss six priority issues: population growth, including ageing; population policies and programmes, with emphasis on resource mobilization for developing

countries; interrelationships between population, development, environment and related matters; changes in population distribution; linkages between enhancing the roles and socio-economic status of women and population dynamics; and family planning programmes, health and family well-being.

A voluntary fund to support the participation of developing countries, especially the least developed, has also been proposed.

5.3 billion in 1990

Dr. Sadik predicted that population growth would reach 98 million annually before the end of the decade. It was also projected that by the year 2000, well over 90 per cent of growth would occur in the developing world. Some $9 billion per year would be required for population activities by that time, she added.

The report on world population trends *(E/CN.9/1991/2)* stated that the total world population had reached 5.3 billion persons in mid-1990.

By the mid-1990s, about one out of every three persons would be a child; one out of five, a person in the late teens or early twenties; and 1 out of 16, aged 65 or older. The median global age would be 24 years.

Increased urbanization—a major problem in developing countries—is addressed in the study, which states that by mid-1990 some 45 per cent—2.4 billion—of the world's population would live in urban areas. Of that, 37 per cent—1.5 billion—in less developed regions and 73 per cent—900 million—in more developed areas.

Global urbanization would reach 51 per cent by the year 2000 and 65 per cent by 2025, the study states. Less developed regions are expected to have about two thirds of their population in urban areas by 2025 and the more developed regions, 83 per cent.

Mexico City was ranked as the largest "urban agglomeration" in 1990, with an estimated population of 20.2 million, surpassing Tokyo/Yokohama, whose population stands at some 18.1 million.

It was also reported *(E/CN.9/1991/6)* that the volume of out-migration from resource-poor areas in the developing world has increased due to population growth in densely settled agricultural regions. More study of the phenomenon of "rural-rural" migration to ecologically-marginal zones was advocated. That phenomenon had resulted in extensive desertification and deforestation.

An ageing population

In debate, many nations noted that population ageing had become an extremely important issue in their countries. Some said the "dramatic growth" of the elderly population posed problems in such areas as the dependency burden, income, consumption, savings, social security schemes, health care systems, labour-force participation, mobility and productivity.

The proportion of the world population aged 65 and over was estimated to have increased from 5 per cent in 1950 to 6 per cent in 1990; it is projected to reach 10 per cent by 2025.

The proportion of those under the age of 15, after reaching a peak of 38 per cent in 1965, decreased to 32 per cent in 1990.

It was noted that, while the proportion of those over 65 was smaller in developing countries, half of the world's elderly lived in those countries. The problems of ageing that confronted the developed countries, some said, would confront the developing world tomorrow.

Migration

International migration and its impact on sending and receiving countries also concerned the Commission. Some States advocated studying the causes of migration, refugees and asylum-seekers, especially in least developed countries; international migration from less developed to more developed countries; and the demographic, social, economic and political impact of international migration both in countries of origin and destination.

The report on world population trends noted a resurgence of international migration during the late 1980s. The United States admitted more than 3 million permanent immigrants between 1985 and 1989, and had legalized another 460,000 by the end of the decade. The 12 States of the European Community were estimated to have more than 13 million foreign citizens, nearly 60 per cent from countries outside the Community.

More specialists needed

The Commission reported that training of more population specialists in developing countries was needed, as was better access by women to all professional opportunities.

Population projections should be extended from 2025 to the year 2050, it was recommended. A database on experience in integrating population issues into development planning should be created.

The Commission also recommended that its parent body—the Economic and Social Council—request continued monitoring of world population trends and policies and a study of the interrelationships between population and development, particularly in the areas of environment, the role of women and human resources.

Chronicle BookWatch

Yearbook of the United Nations 1986, Volume 40

UN Department of Public Information,
United Nations, New York, 1990
Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht, The Netherlands
1333 pp., $95. Sales No. E.90.I.1 ISBN 0-7923-1076-4

The dozen writers and editors who created the new edition of the *Yearbook* achieve a miracle of detail and clarity in reviewing the events of 1986. Opening with the "Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization", the first part of the volume treats the major questions dealt with by the UN. Part Two highlights the activities of the intergovernmental agencies. The texts of resolutions and the votes by which they were adopted buttress the chapters. Appendices provide the Charter and UN structure, as well as the 1986 roster and agendas. Extensive indices of subjects, names, resolutions and decisions foster the effective use of the hefty volume. Politicians, journalists, human rights advocates, historians, students—in fact the people of the world concerned with the workings of the UN—will find this, like the previous *Yearbooks*, indispensable.

The United Nations in Development: Reform Issues in the Economic and Social Fields, A Nordic Perspective

Final Report, The Nordic UN Project, Stockholm, 1991
116 pp., ISBN 91-22-01437-3

"It is the firm belief of our Governments", write the Nordic Under-Secretaries for International Development Co-operation, "that an acceleration of the reform process of the UN system is imperative". From this conviction came the Nordic UN Project, which began its work in 1988 under the direction of these officials. Its Final Report underscores the importance of ongoing discussions toward the restructuring and revitalization of the UN in the economic and social fields. High priority is given to strengthening the UN role in development operations, emergency assistance and the collection and dissemination of information. Refreshingly frank, the Report considers the problems of coordination, financing and staffing policy, and proposes changes in the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Council and the specialized agencies.

The Encyclopedia of the United Nations and International Agreements

Edmund Jan Osmanczyk
Taylor and Francis, London, 1990 (second edition)
1220 pp., £175 ($340). ISBN 0-85066-833-6

Shortly before he died in 1989, Edmund Jan Osmanczyk, Polish patriot, journalist and parliamentarian, finished this new edition of an extraordinary encyclopedia detailing UN and other international issues, first published in 1985. The volume makes available a world of information, including texts of international agreements from the early nineteenth century to the present. Indices, meaning of acronyms, and spelling of words frequently found in UN douments enhance its usefulness. Nothing illustrates Osmanczyk's idiosyncratic perspective so well as his inclusion of astrology, which he characterizes as "a subject of international cooperation".

The Atmosphere of the Living Planet Earth

J. P. Bruce
World Meteorological Organization, Geneva, 1990
42 pp., ISBN 92-63-10735-1

Surprisingly readable and lovingly designed, this booklet offers all that the non-expert requires to understand global warming, ozone depletion, contamination of vital food chains and acidification of lakes and forests. Seldom is a call to action so compelling.

A Study of the Soviet Economy

International Monetary Fund, World Bank,
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and
Development, European Bank for Reconstruction
and Development, Paris 1991
3 vols., FF 500 ($100). ISBN 92-64-13468-9

In July 1990, the Houston Economic Summit called for a detailed study of the Soviet economy with recommendations for reform and the design of criteria for Western economic assistance. The result is this three-volume study, including background papers. Economic developments and macroeconomic policies and reforms are treated in the first volume, while the second and third deal with systemic and sectoral issues.

Reviewed by Harold Fruchtbaum,
Professor, Columbia University, New York

A Look Back . . . 10 years ago . . . 1981

UN Photo 120990

International Year of Disabled Persons: Seeking self-reliance

By Monica Gutestam

Walking up a flight of stairs to a classroom, getting into the tub for a morning bath, running to catch a cab on a crowded city street at rush hour, reading a book, watching television, listening to the radio, coping with job and family stress—these are ordinary, everyday experiences for most people. But for many of the 500 million disabled people in the world, they can be painful, if not impossible, tasks.

One of the main goals in life is to become self-reliant, to experience the deep satisfaction of being able to take care of ourselves. That satisfaction is being denied to many disabled people everywhere, as a consequence of mental, physical or sensory impairment.

With a little help, many of these people could become self-functioning, requiring little or no assistance from institutions or charity. Aiming at a world where disability does not automatically condemn a person to life-long dependency, the UN General Assembly proclaimed the year 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons.

The theme for the Year was "Full Participation and Equality". Persons with disabilities, it was stated, have the right to take part fully in the life and development of their societies; enjoy living conditions equal to those of other citizens; and have an equal share in improved conditions resulting from socio-economic development.

The goal of the Year was to translate into practice the central idea contained in the Assembly's 1975 landmark Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons—that these persons have the same political rights as any other human being.

A major outcome of the Year was the elaboration of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The Programme, adopted by the Assembly in 1982, is the main UN policy document on disability.

It contains a global strategy to prevent disability, enhance rehabilitation and provide for the full participation of persons with disabilities in social life and development.

"Equality and participation" is the guiding principle of the Programme, which stresses the importance of treating issues concerning disabled persons not in isolation, but within the context of the services that are offered to the entire population.

Because the Programme's recommendations could not be implemented overnight, the Assembly proclaimed the period 1983-1992 as the UN Decade of Disabled Persons, thus setting an initial timeframe for Governments and organizations to implement recommended actions.

Looking back, there have been both achievements and disappointments during the Decade. In some countries where both will and commitment have been strong, Governments, service agencies and other organizations have worked with the disabled community to institute changes. But little progress has been made in other countries where assistance to the disabled is either limited or virtually non-existent due to the general poverty of the population at large.

Evaluating the Decade, Henryk Sokalski, who heads the Social Development Division of the UN Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (CSDHA) in Vienna, stated that the biggest problem has been to sustain the momentum of the Year into the Decade. After the Year, the UN could provide no additional resources for the Decade. It has been an uphill battle to sustain the constant high-powered worldwide publicity and promotion of activities needed, he said.

Despite these difficulties, there have been some definite achievements. The Decade has managed to make the public aware of the existence of a very large disabled population, and help change the traditional perception of disabled people as "handicapped".

A "handicap" is not something people are born with or acquire by accident or disease, but a product of the relationship between disabled persons and their environment, the World Programme states. It occurs when the disabled face cultural, physical or social barriers, which prevent them from functioning in society like any other citizen. It is "the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the life of the community on an equal level with others".

The UN at work

CSDHA is the focal point within the UN system on matters relating to disability. The Centre prepares publications and acts as a clearinghouse for information on disability issues; promotes national, regional and international programmes and activities; provides guidance to Governments and non-governmental organizations; and gives substantive support to technical cooperation projects and activities.

Aside from disability, the Centre also coordinates activities related to crime prevention and criminal justice, social development and social welfare, youth, ageing and women.

Since 80 per cent of the world's disabled live in developing countries, many projects in which the Centre participates relate to those countries.

Projects are often co-sponsored by the UN Development Programme (UNDP). For example, in 1990, Chad needed assistance in structuring a national disability programme. UNDP and the Centre assisted the Government of Chad in creating a programme to strengthen grass roots-level work for social development.

The Centre was one of nine UN bodies which contributed to a mission to Chernobyl to assess the impact of the 1989 nuclear reactor accident. Centre experts found that while the Chernobyl accident had not produced any significant increase in the physically disabled population in general, the increase in susceptibility to disease and accident brought about by radiation exposure, inadequate nutrition and lack of rehabilitation equipment has increased the number of disability incidents in the region.

These findings have led the Centre to launch a programme of cooperation with agencies in the Ukrainian SSR to provide care and protection for the disabled.

Awards for service to disabled

Since 1987, the UN has awarded 27 testimonials to individuals or organizations in recognition of their outstanding support to the disabled persons programme and to the activities of the UN Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992).

The 1990 awards were given to Dr. Harry S. Y. Fang of Hong Kong, a world-renowned orthopaedic surgeon and leader in the development of rehabilitation services in Asia and the Pacific; Michel Gillibert, Secretary of State, responsible for Disabled Persons in France; the Liliane Foundation of the Netherlands, an internationally-recognized basic outreach programme for disabled children and their families; the National Council on Disability of the United States, a federal agency; and the Ljubljana Service for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Disability in Yugoslavia.

NEWS ALMANAC

UN aids Albania in first free elections in 50 years

A UN team of technical experts helped Albania in an advisory capacity to prepare for the country's first free democratic elections in over 50 years. The elections were held on 31 March.

Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar and Albanian Foreign Minister Muhamet Kapllani met in New York on 18 March to discuss the UN role in those elections.

In Tirana, Albania's capital, Ramiz Alia, Chairman of the Presidium of the People's Assembly of Albania, on 4 March met with General Assembly President Guido de Marco of Malta. A day earlier, the Assembly President had met with leaders of three Albanian political parties.

Security Council asks parties to respect cease-fire in Liberia

The Security Council on 22 January called on the parties to the conflict in Liberia to continue to respect the cease-fire agreement which they had signed on 24 October 1990 and to cooperate fully with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to restore peace and normalcy in that country. The Council welcomed the resumption of the UN emergency programme in Liberia following the acceptance of a cease-fire.

Japanese is 100,000th patent applicant

A Japanese applicant on 25 February was the 100,000th person to file for an international patent under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) system of worldwide patent protection operated by the Geneva-based World Intellectual Property Organization. An international application filed under PCT, which came into operation on 1 June 1978, has the effect of a national patent application in each of the Treaty's 48 Contracting States.

The 100,000 international applications are equivalent to approximately 1.4 million national or regional applications in contracting States. Since 1988, use of the system has increased worldwide by an average of 27.7 per cent each year.

UN Photo

TO WORLD PEACE: **Zubin Mehta directs the New York Philharmonic in Beethoven's Symphony No.9 at a concert dedicated to world peace in the General Assembly Hall on 27 March. The New York Choral Artists, under the direction of Joseph Flummerfelt, also performed.**

ECE-ECLAC high-level economic dialogue launched

Top government officials from Latin America and the Caribbean, and from Central and Eastern Europe met behind closed doors in Vienna on 10 March for two days of informal discussions on the economic transition in their respective regions. Bela Kadar, Hungary's Minister for International Trade, said that apart from the theoretical benefits of exchanging and testing ideas, the meeting also served a practical purpose: to establish the basis for future economic and trade relations between the two regions.

Participants agreed to continue their dialogue in a more formal framework. Albania, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Ecuador, Hungary, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Romania, the USSR and Venezuela were represented. The ground-breaking meeting—the first of its kind—was organized by the UN Economic Commissions for Europe (ECE) and for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

UN asked to expand environmental statistics

Broad support for an expanded UN programme in environmental statistics was voiced at the twenty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission, held at UN Headquarters in New York from 4 to 13 February. The Commission, a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council, which oversees UN work in that area, recommended giving "the maximum possible support" to countries that want to develop statistics on women and special population groups.

The Commission also noted the progress made on a revision of the UN System of National Accounts (SNA). High priority was also assigned to drafting a handbook on the use of the SNA in transition economies and to another manual on national accounting in constant prices and inflation accounting, reflecting the needs of developing countries with inflation problems.

NGOs linked with Council reviewed

The 19-member Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council, met from 21 January to 1 February to review NGO applications for consultative status with the Council. UN Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs Rafeeuddin Ahmed reported that the number of those NGOs had reached 900.

UN cartographic conference for Asia and Pacific meets

The twelfth UN Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok, 20-27 February) recommended that the UN develop a training programme in the application of radar image interpretation to optimize the use of such data in developing countries. It favoured steps to facilitate access to radar data from satellite through expert group meetings with participants from satellite launching countries and developing nations.

The conference, attended by 116 delegates from 34 countries in the region, as well as by participants from Europe, North America, the Middle East and five international scientific organizations, asked the UN Department of Technical Co-operation for Development to develop a set of guidelines relating to the "appropriate transfer of technology in the survey, charting and mapping fields".

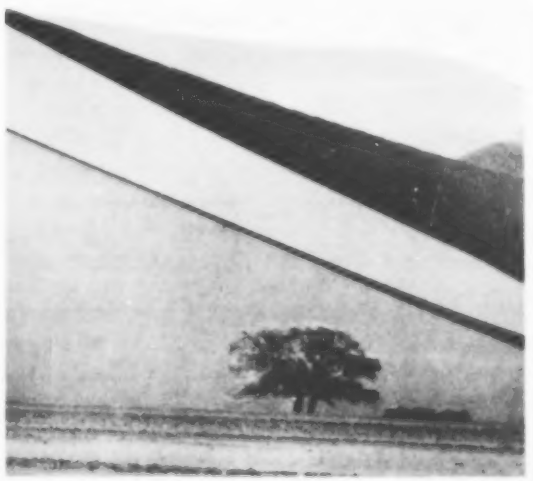
Harmonized food standards urged

An international conference on food standards, chemicals in food and food trade (18-27 March) adopted recommendations aimed at ensuring consumer safety and harmonizing food standards. The conference was jointly organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization, in cooperation with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Held at FAO headquarters in Rome, more than 400 participants from 78 countries and 20 international organizations attended.

UN Stamp Corner

"For a Better Environment" is the theme of three new colourful four-stamp blocks issued by the United Nations Postal Administration (UNPA) on 15 March. The stamps, designed by Carlos Ochagavia of Argentina and issued simultaneously in New York, Geneva and Vienna, commemorate the work of the Geneva-based Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and its 1988 Declaration on the Conservation of Flora, Fauna and Their Habitats.

Scenes of Namibia's unspoiled landscape are featured on six stamps issued by UNPA on 10 May. Adapted by Rocco J. Callari and Robert Stein, both of the United States, from photographs taken by UN photographer John Isaac, a national of India, they mark the 21 March 1990 independence of the newest African nation.



UN Photo/J. Isaac

Namibian landscape photographed by John Isaac.

Coming Up. . .

A preview of some important United Nations conferences and events

July—September 1991

New York

1-12 July	*Ad Hoc* Committee on the Indian Ocean
5-23 August	International Civil Service Commission, 34th session
9 August	Special Committee against Apartheid—Special Meeting in Observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women in South Africa
3-13 September	*Ad Hoc* Committee of the Whole for the Final Review and Appraisal of the UN Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, regular session
17 September	Opening of the 46th session of the General Assembly

Geneva

3-26 July	Economic and Social Council, 2nd regular session
4-5 July	Special High-Level Meeting of the Economic and Social Council
8-26 July	Human Rights Committee, 42nd session
23 July-4 September	Conference on Disarmament, third part
5-23 August	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 40th session
5-30 August	Commission on Human Rights—Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, 43rd session
19-23 August	Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories
28-30 August	Eighth UN International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine
23 September-1 October	World Intellectual Property Organization—Governing bodies
23 September-4 October	UN Conference on Trade and Development, 38th session, first part
September	Third Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

Vienna

1-5 July	UN Industrial Development Organization—Industrial Development Board, 8th session
16-20 September	International Atomic Energy Agency—General Conference, 35th regular session

Other Locations

July	UN University—Council, 37th session, Tokyo
August/September	Preparatory Commission for the International Seabed Authority and for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, venue to be determined
3-6 September	International Fund for Agricultural Development—Executive Board, 43rd session, Rome

UN Membership

In four decades, the membership of the United Nations has more than tripled, from 51 to 159. The countries represented in the Organization now account for over 98 per cent of the world's population.

1945	**THE 51 FOUNDING MEMBERS**: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Byelorussian SSR, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Syria, Turkey, Ukrainian SSR, USSR, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia
1946	Afghanistan, Iceland, Sweden, Thailand
1947	Pakistan, Yemen
1948	Myanmar
1949	Israel
1950	Indonesia
1955	Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Democratic Kampuchea, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Nepal, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sri Lanka
1956	Japan, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia
1957	Ghana, Malaysia
1958	Guinea
1960	Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Gabon, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Togo, Zaire
1961	Mauritania, Mongolia, Sierra Leone, United Republic of Tanzania
1962	Algeria, Burundi, Jamaica, Rwanda, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda
1963	Kenya, Kuwait
1964	Malawi, Malta, Zambia
1965	Gambia, Maldives, Singapore
1966	Barbados, Botswana, Guyana, Lesotho
1968	Equatorial Guinea, Mauritius, Swaziland
1970	Fiji
1971	Bahrain, Bhutan, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates
1973	Bahamas, Germany
1974	Bangladesh, Grenada, Guinea Bissau
1975	Cape Verde, Comoros, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Suriname
1976	Angola, Samoa, Seychelles
1977	Djibouti, Viet Nam
1978	Dominica, Solomon Islands
1979	Saint Lucia
1980	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Zimbabwe
1981	Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Vanuatu
1983	Saint Kitts and Nevis
1984	Brunei Darussalam
1990	Liechtenstein, Namibia

The names of countries are those in use in 1991.

UN System

The units and programmes established by the United Nations over the last 45 years have given it a growing competence to deal with a very wide range of international problems. The list below shows when major units were established.

1945	**UNITED NATIONS**
1946	UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)
1949	UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)
1951	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
1957	International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
1963	World Food Programme (WFP)
1964	International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT (ITC)
1964	UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
1965	UN Development Programme (UNDP)
1965	UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)
1969	UN Population Fund (UNFPA)
1972	Office of the UN Disaster Relief Co ordinator (UNDRO)
1972	UN Environment Programme (UNEP)
1973	United Nations University (UNU)
1974	World Food Council (WFC)
1976	International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)
1978	UN Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)(UNCHS)
1991	UN Drug Control Programme

REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

1947	Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)
1947	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
1948	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
1958	Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
1973	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

Linked to the UN are specialized intergovernmental organizations, some founded in the last century. The list below shows when these organizations or their predecessor bodies were either established or became specialized agencies.

1865	International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
1873	World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
1874	Universal Postal Union (UPU)
1883	World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
1919	International Labour Organisation (ILO)
1945	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)
1945	International Monetary Fund (IMF)
1945	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO)
1946	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
1947	International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
1948	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)
1948	World Health Organization (WHO)
1956	International Finance Corporation (IFC)
1958	International Maritime Organization (IMO)
1960	International Development Association (IDA)
1974	International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
1986	UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

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